















THE XIT RANCH  
OF TEXAS









WESTERN LAND CESSIONS

THE  
XIT RANCH  
OF TEXAS

*And the Early Days  
of The Llano Estacado*

BY  
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FIELD SECRETARY  
PANHANDLE-PLAINS HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY



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TO THE OLD-TIME COWBOY,  
FOR SO LONG  
A STRIKING FIGURE IN AMERICAN  
FRONTIER LIFE







## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

←————→  
THIS *History of the XIT Ranch* is the result of the active interest of Mr. John V. Farwell in the early days of the Texas Plains. I am indebted to him for the many facilities he has placed at my disposal for collecting and compiling the material in this study. The story, by no means exhaustive, is an attempt to sketch in broad outline the history of the Capitol Reservation Lands of Texas.

Much of the source material used herein has been oral, taken from old-time "Texians," cowboys and cattlemen. In spite of the limitations of oral sources, they savor of the soil, and this story would have been impossible without them. I can but merely indicate my indebtedness to these bow-legged men, who took so much of their time to hark back to the days of saddle leather, by inscribing this book to their memory.

I have drawn freely from the files of The Panhandle-Plains Historical Society, Canyon, Texas, whose pioneer work in preserving regional history in Texas is noteworthy. Its source materials have proven valuable. Mr. Farwell has reciprocated this help in generous measure by giving the voluminous XIT Ranch files to that organization. They will be invaluable to students of the history of Northwest Texas.

Ex-President W. H. Taft has kindly read the manuscript

of the chapter dealing with the settlement of the Texas-New Mexico boundary question. I am indebted to him for time taken from a busy life to check the accuracy of the manuscript.

I am particularly grateful to J. Frank Dobie, of the University of Texas, for valuable criticism. Walter Farwell, Syosset, Long Island, has consistently encouraged the preparation of this study. James D. Hamlin, Farwell, Samuel H. Roberts, Amarillo, and Joseph F. Heissler, Chicago, all of the Capitol Reservation Lands organization, have manifested helpful interest. Finally, my associates in The Panhandle-Plains Historical Society have given every aid.

J. EVETTS HALEY.

*Canyon, Texas*  
*January, 1929*



## INTRODUCTION

---

WHILE we are all very familiar with the romance of the sea from the days of Ulysses, we do not know so much about the romance of the Plains, which also have a history.

The stories of the "Spanish Main" may remind us that here in the West we have the great American Desert, with its prairie schooners, and also the Llano Estacado, or Staked Plains, which have a history connected with France, Spain and Mexico; with buffalo, Indians, adventurous pioneers, cowboys, and hardy home-seekers.

Part of this country, in the Panhandle of Texas, north of the Canadian River, was once claimed by France, under Napoleon, and bought from him in the "Louisiana Purchase" by Thomas Jefferson. Later, as it was also claimed by Spain, a compromise boundary treaty was made with that country in 1819, which gave not only all the Panhandle but also "No Man's Land," part of Kansas, New Mexico, and part of Wyoming to Spain.

When the State of Texas, which afterwards obtained possession, desired in 1879 to build a new State House in Austin, Hon. Charles B. Farwell, my uncle, and John V. Farwell, my father, and their associates received title in 1885 to 1888 to three million acres of land in this Llano Estacado, for agreeing to erect the Capitol Building.

Thinking that their descendants and relatives might like

to have a permanent record of the development of this so-called desert from a wild prairie, roamed by Indians, buffalo, mustangs and antelope, to a country of railroads and prosperous farmers, the present owners of what remains of the "Capitol Reservation Lands" have had this story compiled. They trust it may also be of interest to local historians, some present dwellers in the Panhandle, and many lovers of western frontier life in the early days.

For that reason, there has been introduced a broad background to the picture, in the belief that it would bring into more distinct relief the patient and often difficult work of this Syndicate, which has tried, during almost fifty years, to make these prairies a land of comfortable homes and good American citizens.

JOHN V. FARWELL.

*January, 1929*

## BACKWARD, TURN BACKWARD

Backward, turn backward, oh time on your wheels,  
Airplanes, wagons, and automobiles.  
Dress me once more in a sombrero that flaps,  
Spurs, a flannel shirt, boots, slicker, and chaps.  
Give me a sixshooter or two in my hand  
And show me a steer to rope and brand.  
Out where the sage brush is dusty and grey,  
Make me a cowboy again for a day.

Give me a bronc that knows how to dance,  
Buckskin of color and wicked of glance,  
New to the feeling of bridle and bits;  
Give me a quirt that will sting where it hits,  
Strap on poncho behind in roll,  
And pass me the lariat, so dear to my soul;  
Then over the trail let me lope far away,  
Make me a cowboy again for a day.

Thunder of hoofs over range as we ride,  
Hissing of iron and smoking of hide,  
Bellow of cattle and snort of cayuse,  
Longhorns from Texas as wild as the deuce;  
Midnight stampedes and milling of herds  
Yells from the cowmen, too angry for words;  
Right in the midst of it all I would stay,  
Make me a cowboy again for a day.

Under the star-studded canopy vast,  
Campfire coffee, and comfort at last;  
Bacon that sizzles and crisps in the pan,  
After the roundup smells good to a man.  
Tales of the ranchmen and rustlers retold  
Over the pipes as the embers grow cold;  
These are the tunes that old memories play,  
Make me a cowboy again for a day.





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## CHAPTER I

### *Early Explorations*

---

**D**URING the middle eighties the XIT Ranch was established. It was the largest ranch in the cow country of the Old West, and probably the largest fenced range in the world. Its barbed wire enclosed over 3,050,000 acres of land in the Panhandle of Texas, patented by the State to a Chicago firm in exchange for the capitol at Austin. From one hundred to one hundred and fifty cowboys, with combined remudas of more than a thousand cow ponies, "rode herd" upon approximately 150,000 cattle that wore the XIT brand. With the development of this pastoral enterprise, and its relation to the history of Texas, is this story concerned.

The XIT brand was conceived by an old Texas trail driver named Ab Blocker, who placed it upon the first steer. That steer was not an animal of high pedigree, but a Longhorn from South Texas. His color, his gauntness, and his perversity were historic. Nearly two centuries before, with the initial Spanish expedition into the province for the purpose of founding a settlement in 1690, there came a similar Mexican steer. He walked streaming from the waters of the Rio Grande, cropped the first grass on the northern shore, switched his tail at a persistent fly and felt at home. Long of horn and leg, variegated in color, and belligerent of disposition, he came, prophetic of the millions and millions of others to fatten upon the grasses of the border State.

As he pushed north and east with the expedition of Governor Alonzo de Leon and Father Massanet, the tallow thickened over his ribs and he became smooth and glossy. He sprang of hardy and wily stock. As he fled to the nearest pool or mud hole to escape the attentions of the heel fly, as he fought off the wolves by night and outran the thieving Indians by day, he built up a spirit of independence and of resourcefulness that made him a companion of the wilderness and a fighter of the frontier.

By the time the East Texas missions were abandoned in 1693, this Longhorn steer, like a wayward son, had broken the ties that bound him to his native range, and when the soldiers and missionaries returned to Mexico, he stayed in Texas. His associates, the Mexican cows, matched wits with the wilderness, met claw and fang with horns and cow-sense, and when the Spaniards came again, twenty-three years later, Longhorn cattle grazed the East Texas grass-lands. Since that first memorable day Texas has never been without cattle. For two centuries live stock has formed one of its chief sources of wealth. Wherever "Texas" is heard, steers are thought of, and the head of the Longhorn is almost as emblematic of Texas as is the lone star. Texas and cows are almost synonymous.

In 1836, nearly a century and a half after this first expedition into Texas, the Anglo-American pioneers wrested the State from Mexico and pushed the last soldier of the Southern Republic from her borders. There remained, fortunately for the Texans, a phase of life and an industry suited to the frontier—an industry essentially Spanish in origin and methods. The industry was pastoral and the life was that of the cattle herder. Ten years later the congressional struggles were ended, and Texas entered the Union with the important provision that she retain all her public lands. Texas

then possessed vast millions of acres unmeasured by surveyor's chain and prairie lands untrod by human feet. Her first bid to international attention was made through land. As the most effective utilization of the soil by a limited population lay in the frontier pursuit of grazing, it was natural that among her first claims to economic consideration were herds of Longhorn steers trailed to other States.

A scattered and meager population lived in East and South Texas, occupying but a small portion of the State. Texas had more land than people, and there was much truth in the time-worn saying that she was land poor. However, in large measure, it was upon that so-called poverty that her public school system was built, that her state university was founded, that her generous homestead policy was adopted, that large ranches secured their holdings, and that the state capitol was built.

The Texas State House, the second largest building in the United States and seventh among the world's greatest structures, was built in exchange for three million acres of land set aside by an act of the Texas Legislature in 1879. The tract lay along the western border of the Panhandle. At that time scarce a score of people were upon it, while not a ploughshare had broken the sod, and not a wire fence had enclosed an acre of grass. These three million acres were converted into the XIT Ranch, pending the arrival of the farming settler. The history of this ranch is a story of cows, horses, and cowmen. Further, it is the story of the farming settler in the Panhandle-Plains country of Texas; a story of the struggle of men with the soil.

Very little was known of the Panhandle by the legislators "down in the skillet" when this land was set aside. Therefore they congratulated themselves upon rare business judgment when they traded three million acres of "arid"

land for a great building. Faint glimmerings of the sectional partisanship still smouldering in the heart of Texas may be seen from the pride felt in driving such a hard trade with a "bunch of Yankees." The satisfaction felt by the legislators is not remarkable, because the earliest descriptions of the country, filtering back to the settlements from uncertain sources, marked the region as arid land—a part of "the Great American Desert." In the absence of accurate information, legend supplied the deficiency, and this popular myth clung with unusual pertinacity. So persistent was the belief in aridity that in the *Census Reports* of 1880 a man of some vision, who was said to have "carefully explored the Panhandle and adjacent Texas," reported that "not more than 7,000,000 acres of the Llano Estacado within the state of Texas can be regarded as an absolute desert. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

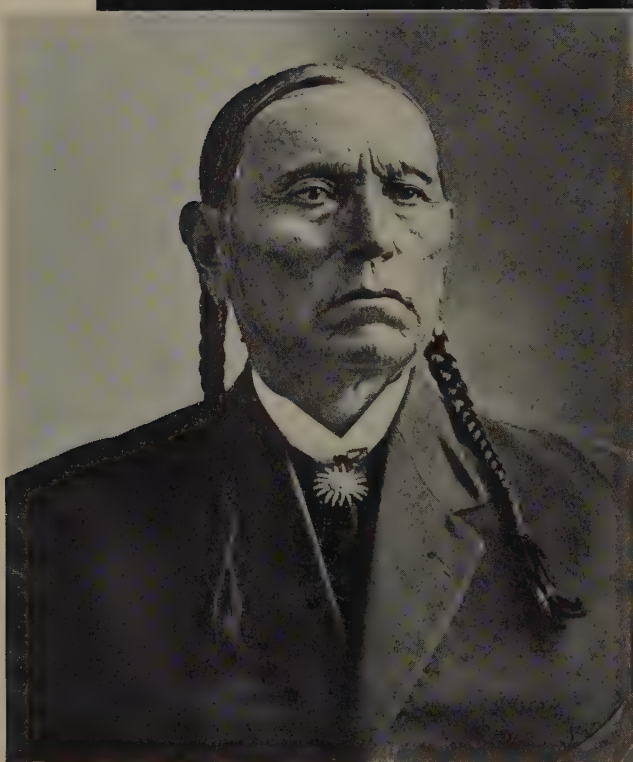
The men who contracted to build the capitol were more optimistic than the man who reported for the Census. A state commissioner surveyed the lands, rejecting those portions he felt unfit for either farming or grazing purposes, and published his report. It was accurate and truthful. The fact that the land was accepted without being seen bespeaks the confidence of the contractors in the report, even though such was not indicative of sound business policy. The tremendous influx of English, Scotch, and Eastern capital into the West was just beginning, and the wild and furious scramble of syndicates after cattle and land may have made them a little less cautious. In reality, they looked to a day nearly fifty years ahead, though hardly aware it was that far distant, when the land-hungry settlers who lived by the plow should stampede across the Plains of Texas and cause the XIT lands to enhance in value

<sup>1</sup>*United States Census Reports*, 1880, III, 967.



SHORTLY BEFORE THE XIT RANCH WAS ESTABLISHED, BUFFALO ROAMED THE PLAINS THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS





AMONG THE FINE COMANCHE HORSEMEN AND FEARLESS RAIDERS, QUANAH PARKER, CHIEF AND LATER A MASTER MASON, WAS PARTICULARLY NOTED

many fold. It seems that the action of the Texas Legislature was dictated, in part, by that foe of sound administrative policy—expediency. The action of the other party to the contract was in part impelled by a vision of settlement. But the results have been mutually beneficial.

Though settlement of this region did not begin until the middle seventies, some little knowledge of the area had been gained from explorers. Undoubtedly the first white man to look across the Staked Plains and marvel at its vast expanse was a Spaniard. Just twenty years after Hernán Cortez captured the city of Mexico and shattered the kingdom of the Montezumas, another conqueror, clad in gilt armor, pushed far to the North into New Mexico to disturb the aborigines. His name was Francisco Vasquez de Coronado and he was searching for the "Seven Cities of Cibola," which were

situated on a great height. Their doors were studded with turquoises, as if feathers from the wings of the blue sky had dropped and clung there. Within those jeweled cities were whole streets of goldsmiths, so great was the store of shining metal to be worked.

Beyond these cities lay others of even greater splendor. Disillusioned in New Mexico, Coronado's spirit flamed forth again as he heard of another El Dorado called Gran Quivira, a wonderful city across the Plains to the east.

The chief of that country took his afternoon nap under a tall spreading tree decorated with an infinitude of little golden bells on which gentle zephyrs played his lullaby. Even the common folk there had their ordinary dishes made of "wrought plate"; and the pitchers and bowls were of solid gold.

Coronado impatiently awaited the arrival of the spring of 1541, when he set out for this fabled land. By June he was in western Texas, crossing the future Capitol Reservation. He veered to the north into Kansas and found the home of the Wichita Indians. But



there no sparkling sails floated like petals on the clear surface of an immeasurable stream. No lordly chief drowsed to the murmur of innumerable bells. The water pitchers on the low entrances of their grass thatched huts were not golden.

Coronado pushed on until near the line which separates Kansas from Nebraska, in hopeful but fruitless quest. His guide, induced by the Pecos Indians to lead the Spaniards out upon the Plains, lose them, and allow them to perish of thirst, was suspected and put to death. And so Coronado returned to New Mexico with no more gold than that which glinted from his own armor.<sup>2</sup>

About 1593 an unauthorized Spanish expedition into New Mexico under Bonilla and Humana crossed to the buffalo country of the Panhandle.<sup>3</sup> But after Coronado's explorations the Texas Plains were rarely disturbed by white men for nearly three hundred years. Only a few explorers penetrated the region. Don Juan de Oñate, as every other *conquistador* of New Spain, heard the marvels of Gran Quivira, and in June, 1601, set out from Galisteo, New Mexico, to find this city for himself. He reached the Canadian, and followed it eastward nearly to Antelope Hills. His men caught fish from the Canadian, killed buffalo upon the Plains, and gathered wild plums and grapes in the valleys. Oñate turned northward, evidently reached the Arkansas River, found an Indian town of over five thousand inhabitants, but not a street crowded with goldsmiths. From the vicinity of Wichita, Kansas, Oñate and his men back-trailed to San Gabriel.<sup>4</sup> History presents no explorers comparable to the intrepid *conquistadores* of New Spain. Even legend reveals no more zealous searchers after treasure.

<sup>2</sup>G. P. Hammond, "The Founding of New Mexico," *New Mexico Historical Review*, January, 1926, pp. 45-47.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, October, 1926, pp. 474-477.

Finally peace with the Comanches made feasible the opening of a route connecting San Antonio, Texas, with Santa Fe, New Mexico. In 1786, Pedro Vial, a Frenchman, was commissioned by the Governor of Texas to explore a route. Vial came north, passing east of the Plains to the Red River, somewhere near Ringgold. He turned up the stream, crossed to the Canadian, pushed through what came to be known as the Alamocitos country of the XIT ranch, and reached Santa Fe in May, 1787. A few months later Jose Mares crossed the Panhandle by a more southerly route upon a like exploration.<sup>5</sup> But three centuries passed from the time of Coronado before much was known of this country. Then a few explorers from the United States began to trace the river courses.

The Red River of Louisiana claimed the attention of several early exploring parties. In 1806 Captain Richard Sparks, in the service of the United States, attempted to ascend the river to its source. He was stopped far short of his goal by a detachment of Spanish cavalry. Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike ascended the Arkansas River the same year with instructions to cross to the source of the Red and follow down the stream. He first mistook the Arkansas and then the Rio Grande for the Red. He never reached Texas from the west, as the Mexicans cut short his explorations by placing him under arrest. Then came Major S. H. Long, in 1820, bent upon the third effort to discover the source of the stream.<sup>6</sup> He came south from the Arkansas and followed down the Canadian until near its mouth before he discovered his mistake. During 1823 John H. Fonda crossed the Panhandle on his way to Santa Fe from Fort Towson, Indian Territory. He is reputed to have traveled up Red

<sup>5</sup> Herbert E. Bolton, *Texas in the Middle Eighteenth Century*, 128-130.

<sup>6</sup> R. G. Thwaites, *Early Western Travels*, XVI, 85.

River to its source before turning north to the Canadian.<sup>7</sup>

The ill-fated Texas-Santa Fe Expedition, which represented the only attempt of the young republic to share in the profits of the caravan trade with the New Mexican settlements, wandering aimlessly through the breaks and across the plains of the Panhandle, probably came to the source of the river in 1841, but left no accurate topographical data.<sup>8</sup> In 1852 Captain R. B. Marcy crossed the Panhandle from east to west, explored the Palo Duro Canyon, and claimed the distinction of being the first to thoroughly explore Red River to its source.<sup>9</sup> Before this noteworthy exploration the "commerce of the prairies" had made a contribution to topographical knowledge.

The Santa Fe Trail, stretching from Independence, Missouri, to Santa Fe, New Mexico, had become an institution of the Southwest. Essentially a highway of commerce, it came into prominence in the decade following 1820, and continued to be an important thoroughfare for many years. Along its rutted course cling memories colorful and romantic, drab and tragic. One branch of this trail looped to the south and crossed the Panhandle, but the Comanche hazard was always too great to make it an enticing gamble, and it was used but little.

Among those to travel the southern route was Josiah Gregg,<sup>10</sup> who in 1831 as a physical weakling and convalescent set out from Independence seeking health more than profit.<sup>11</sup> He soon recovered his health, became intrigued

<sup>7</sup> Cardinal Goodwin, *The Trans-Mississippi West*, 68-69.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> R. B. Marcy, *Exploration of the Red River of Louisiana*, 29-57.

<sup>10</sup> Josiah Gregg is the foremost historian of the Santa Fe trade. He observed that the "virtual commencement" of the trade may be dated from 1822, when the trek was being made with pack trains. Two years later a venturesome party, with twenty-three four-wheeled carts, and two of two wheels, began the wagon traffic. Several years later more "adventurers with large capital" began entering the trade, and it swelled to importance. Thwaites, XIX, 180-181.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

with the romance of the trade, the freedom of prairie life, and the spirit of the trail, and actively engaged in the business for several years. In 1839 the French were blockading Mexico. Gregg saw great profit in supplying shut-in Chihuahua with needed goods. He resolved to make an early start and go by way of Santa Fe. In the region farther south an earlier spring meant earlier grass. Therefore, Gregg shipped \$25,000 worth of goods up the Arkansas River to Van Buren, five miles below Fort Smith. Here the earlier season enabled him to embark ahead of the Independence caravans. The outcome of the venture is not of particular interest to this story, but his observations and experiences as he crossed the Panhandle are.

The last outpost was Camp Holmes, in Indian Territory, where Auguste Pierre Chouteau had built a fort to trade with the Plains Indians. From this point the course across the Panhandle was unbroken and unknown. Gregg wrote: "We had to depend entirely upon our knowledge of the geographical position of the country for which we were steering and the indications of a compass and sextant. This was emphatically a pioneer trip, such a one as had, perhaps, never before been undertaken—to convey heavily laden wagons through a country almost wholly untrod by civilized men, and of which we, at least, knew nothing."

At Chouteau's fort he met and talked with a Comanche chief, Tabbu-Quena, or the Big Eagle. The Indian informed Gregg "that the route up the Canadian presented no obstacles according to *his* mode of traveling." Since the Indian traveled wherever a saddle horse could pass, this was small comfort to a man with heavy wagons. Big Eagle drew a map which Gregg declared "a far more accurate delineation of all the rivers of the plains, the road from Missouri to Santa Fe, and the different Mexican

settlements, than is to be found in any of the engraved maps of those regions."<sup>12</sup>

The caravan traveled in accord with the practice of the trail. While crossing the Indian country the wagons moved in double file, so that they could be "corralled" more quickly in case of an attack and all stock turned inside the enclosure.<sup>13</sup> Gregg stopped to smoke the pipe of peace with a war party of Comanches who were on their way to fight the Pawnees; again to trade blankets, looking-glasses, flints, tobacco, beads, and other trinkets, for mules. Generally the traders avoided any barter with the Indians through fear of their duplicity. But Gregg passed through the Panhandle without serious mishap and followed up the Canadian into New Mexico.<sup>14</sup>

In 1841, two years after Gregg's trail-blazing trip from Fort Smith, the Texas-Santa Fe Expedition crossed the Panhandle. Its uncertain course was a trail of woe. It moved out from the Texas settlements to a bugle call, with men in high spirits responding to the charm of camp life, sped on their journey with the well-wishes of President Lamar of the Republic. Weeks later, lost among the canyons and breaks along the eastern edge of the Plains, provisions gone, game scarce and water uncertain, the party was in a sorry plight.

Prairie dogs, killed for food, proved "exceedingly sweet, tender, and juicy," and the wild horse furnished excellent meat. But both became scarce and starvation faced the party. Hackberries were picked from the trees, and a wretched but hopeful life was eked out upon tortoises, snakes and "every living and creeping thing" which might be seized upon for food. Occasionally a skunk, peculiarly

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 100-110.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 125-131.



and most effectively protected from almost every animal of prey, "would reward someone more fortunate than the rest." A few of the men were killed by Indians, articles of trade were burned by a prairie fire, the entire force was arrested by Governor Armijo and sent to Mexico City and to prison, and thus the venture turned out the most abject tragedy of the long list of tragedies of the Santa Fe trade.<sup>15</sup> Some years later another party crossed the Panhandle following Gregg's trace along the Canadian.

Captain R. B. Marcy piloted a party of emigrants from Fort Smith to Santa Fe in 1849. But for the birth of twin boys, perhaps the first white children native to the Panhandle, the trip was uneventful.<sup>16</sup> Except for these various explorations the Panhandle was the undisputed and uncoveted home of the Plains Indians, happy mortals in their nomadic life and tribal wars.

Most feared of these tribes were the Kiowa and Comanche, who gave much trouble along the Santa Fe Trail. Gregg was not molested as he passed through Texas in 1839, but an engagement, illustrative of the dangers of the trail, occurred in the western Panhandle in the winter of 1832 and 1833. A party of twelve traders had wound up their business in Santa Fe at a late date, and, fearing to venture by the northern and more frequented way, chose the Texas branch of the trail and followed down the Canadian. They must have had a successful season, for they possessed \$10,000 in specie, loaded upon pack animals. Anticipation of the happiness of reaching home must have been keen and must have lent spurs to weary muscles as the pack animals were urged across the grama covered slopes bordering the river and were driven splashing through its dancing

<sup>15</sup> G. W. Kendall, *The Narrative of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition*, I, 195, 199, 201, 206, 253.

<sup>16</sup> R. B. Marcy "Report of —," pp. 169-184, Ex. Doc. No. 64, 31st Congress, First Session.

eddies. But grim tragedy trailed behind. Fond hearts "back in the States" vainly listened for the beat of horses' hoofs and the creak of saddle leather, heralds of a trader's return.

The men were versed in Indian treachery, and when they met a party of Comanches and Kiowas, preparations for defense were hastily made. Observing this, the Indians stopped at a distance and professed friendship. Then a few advanced to the traders, one or two more joined them, and others came in like manner until the traders were surrounded. The situation was unpleasant, and the white men pushed forward hoping that the Indians would drop behind and leave them. But the Indians turned their ponies and rode alongside. The first hostile move came when two mules veered from the course and the trader who reined off to drive them back was shot and killed. A general fire opened; the traders jumped from their horses, threw off the pack-saddles for protection, and began banking dirt around them. All the while an active fire was maintained on both sides, and another of the traders was killed. The horses and mules were soon shot down, making escape in this way impossible, and the siege continued for thirty-six hours. Sufficient food could be obtained from the dead pack animals lying about, but there was danger of dying of thirst. A bold break was resolved upon.

The owners of the train allowed each man to take as much of the specie as he could carry. The remainder, all but a few hundred dollars, was buried, and the men made their escape. Upon running short of provisions, and with no ammunition for game, the men lived upon roots and tender bark of trees. Dissension arose over the right course to follow, and the ten separated into two parties of five each. One of these, after untold suffering, reached the Creek settlements upon the Arkansas and was treated kindly. The





SPRING LAKE DIVISION HEADQUARTERS



CANYONS, HILLS AND SCRUB TIMBER OFFERED PROTECTION TO CATTLE RUSTLERS. UNCLE HENRY STEPHENS COMFORTABLY LOOKS THE COUNTRY OVER

other did not fare so well. Three of the five were abandoned to an unministered end, among them a Mr. Schenck who had been wounded in the thigh, a man of "talent and excellent family connections."<sup>17</sup> But a stern frontier made no distinction in its exactions. Cultured and uncultured followed the same trails, fought the same fights, and died similar deaths.

At that early day the Indians rode the Plains, hunting where game grazed most abundantly. This land was theirs. Here they made their last stand, and fought savagely. Among the tribes frequenting the upper Red River country the most powerful were the Kiowas and Comanches.<sup>18</sup> Known as "the Arabs of the deserts of North America," the Comanches were addicted to a transient life. They hunted as far north as the 38th parallel, and they raided to the settlements of Northern Mexico.<sup>19</sup>

Captain Marcy observed the Comanche with interest, one as

Free as the boundless plains over which he roams, as he neither knows nor wants any luxuries beyond what he finds in the buffalo or the deer around him. These serve him with food, clothing, and a covering for his lodge, and he sighs not for the titles and distinction that occupy the thoughts and engage the energies of civilized man. His only ambition consists in being able to cope successfully with his enemy in war, and in managing his steed with unfailing adroitness.<sup>20</sup>

The Comanches all but lived astride a horse. From the plunder of a Santa Fe caravan they might sweep south to depredate upon the frontier of Texas, or farther still, to strike terror into the hearts of the Mexicans and drive away their horses and mules. A well-worn trail stretched from the upper plains of the Arkansas through the Panhandle

<sup>17</sup> Thwaites, XX, 133-136.

<sup>18</sup> R. B. Marcy, *Exploration of the Red River of Louisiana*, 94.

<sup>19</sup> John Pope, "Report to War Department," 1854, p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> Marcy, as cited, 95.



and West Texas into Mexico. It was tramped deep and hard by the scurry of thousands of hoofs, stolen in Mexico and driven north for trade. The trail intersected the valley of Red River, skirted the Llano Estacado on the east, crossed the Brazos, and connected "the extreme western permanent watering-places." From the Brazos it bore south and southwest, crossing the headwaters of the Colorado, touching at Sulphur Springs, north and west of Big Spring, to the next water at the Mustang Springs and across a long stretch of unwatered country to the Horse Head Crossing on the Pecos.<sup>21</sup>

Captain John Pope, exploring a prospective route for the first Pacific railway, crossed the South Plains in 1854, and met a party of Kiowas at Mustang Springs. Some thousand head of horses held by the fifty members of the band indicated the success of their raid into Mexico.<sup>22</sup>

The Comanches were even more efficient thieves than the Kiowas. Their respect of property rights was "strictly Spartan." "They are perhaps as arrant freebooters as can be found upon the face of the earth," Marcy wrote, "and they regard stealing from strangers as perfectly legitimate and honorable, and that man who had been most successful in this is the most highly honored by his tribe; indeed a young man who has not made one or more of these expeditions into Mexico is held in but little repute." And there was an old chief of the Northern Comanches, called Os-sa-keep, fond father of four sons, "as fine young men as could be found," who took much comfort from the fact that these hopefuls could steal more horses than any other young men in the tribe.<sup>23</sup> Paternal pride pleasantly sped his later years as his sons grew up, virtuosos among the thieves.

<sup>21</sup>Pope, as cited, 16, 78.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 16, 72.

<sup>23</sup>Marcy, *Explorations*, 97.

Mexico suffered long from Indian ravages. The Comanches rode into the settlements of the northern states in broad day, and almost unopposed drove off stock and carried away many captives. Strangely enough, after the captives had tasted the lotus of nomadic prairie life for a time, they rarely wished to return to their home. The Indians were

“objects of the extremest terror to the Mexicans; and it is related that a single Comanche even at mid-day, dashed at speed into the city of Durango, and by his mere presence caused the hasty closing of the stores and public places of the city, and the rapid retreat of a population of thirty thousand souls to their barred houses. He remained an hour roaming through the deserted streets, and was only captured by being lassoed from the window of a house as he was riding triumphantly but carelessly from the suburbs.”<sup>24</sup>

These Indians wintered in the valleys of the upper Colorado, Brazos, and Red Rivers. In the summer, the greater part of the tribe migrated north to hunt the buffalo and mustang upon the plains of the upper Arkansas.<sup>25</sup> Major Long, who met a party of Kaskaskia Indians in the Panhandle in 1820, observed that they evinced “great dexterity in throwing the rope, taking in this way” many wild horses.<sup>26</sup> They crossed long stretches of dry country, carrying water in flabby canteens made of undressed buffalo stomachs.<sup>27</sup> Modern nurseries were unknown, nor had baby buggies reached the Plains, but children too young to sit upon a horse were lashed to the saddle by their legs, and rode along “in entire unconcern.”<sup>28</sup> But their days of plains life were numbered. Placed upon the reservations of Indian Territory in the early seventies, they broke forth

<sup>24</sup> Pope, as cited, 14-15.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.

<sup>26</sup> Thwaites, XVI, 119.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 104-105.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

again to their prairie hunting grounds, to be corralled at last by the troops of R. S. Mackenzie and Nelson A. Miles in 1874. But for a few more outbreaks in different parts of the country, the last raids were done. The fine physical specimen degenerated, the exquisite folk-lore conjured by the rich imaginations of centuries died with silent tongues, the horseman became a pedestrian, the buffalo lance fell to rust, and the finely tempered mustang of the buffalo chase became a plow horse. "Progress" decreed these changes.

The explorers of the early days never imagined the Plains as a home for many thousands. Major Long did "not hesitate" to give the opinion that the northern Panhandle was "almost wholly unfit for cultivation, and of course uninhabitable by a people depending upon agriculture. . . ." And also Edwin James, who accompanied Long, had "little apprehension of giving too unfavorable an account of this . . . country." To him it was an "unfit residence for any but a Nomad population. The traveller who shall at any time have traversed its desolate sands, will, we think, join us in the wish that this region may forever remain the unmolested haunt of the native hunter, the bison and the jackall."<sup>29</sup>

Gregg wrote in similar vein that the Plains were too dry for agriculture, and "seem only fitted for the haunts of the mustang, the buffalo, the antelope, and their migratory lord, the prairie Indian."<sup>30</sup> Marcy had little more hope for the "inhospitable" Plains and felt sure they were destined to remain the home of the savage, "possessing as they do, so few attractions to civilized man." Verily, these early explorers would never have made land promotion agents or chamber of commerce secretaries. But, as Thwaites

<sup>29</sup>Thwaites, XIV, 20-21.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, XX, 248. Also pp. 111-112.



AN ABUNDANTLY WATERED COUNTRY IS NECESSARY FOR THE PRODUCTION OF FINE CATTLE. HERE IS THE KLONDIKE MILL  
AND TANK IN THE SOD HOUSE PASTURE





"BARBECUE" CAMPBELL FINALLY GOT A FEW WINDMILLS IN OPERATION TO WATER THE INCOMING CATTLE

wrote, "such a verdict was not welcomed by an expansive people, eager to enter into and possess a land which imagination pictures as suitable for the seat of an empire." The farming frontier, however, marched with too eager tread, and there was much harm done by over-stepping. Eager settlers, with no knowledge of dry land farming, rushed into the west from regions of abundant rainfall. The hundreds of abandoned claims of the middle nineties, marked by tumbling sod shacks, express a graphic story. These reverses lead one to doubt whether the conservatism of the early explorers "was not wiser than the confidence of the more ardent expansionists. . . ." <sup>31</sup>

However, Marcy was impressed with the healthfulness of the country, and Gregg saw more when he uttered, almost prophetically, that "this unequalled pasturage [of] the great western prairies affords a sufficiency to graze cattle for the supply of the United States." <sup>32</sup>

When the Indian could no longer range at will and when the Anglo-American hunter was slaughtering the last of the buffalo, the day of which Gregg wrote had come.

<sup>31</sup> Thwaites, XIV, 20-21.

<sup>32</sup> Thwaites, XX, 248.



## CHAPTER II

### *Traces of Spanish Life Upon the Plains*

BEFORE the coming of the cowboy, before the buffalo hunters straggled in, and even before the earliest Anglo-American explorers came, the Panhandle of Texas was known to the Spaniard and the Mexican. To the Plains many years ago came buffalo hunters or *ciboleros*. They came annually from the little Mexican villages shut off from the rest of the world and hunted, not with high-powered rifles, but with be-tasseled lances and fleet ponies. At times they brought hard-baked loaves of bread and other articles to trade to the Indians.<sup>1</sup> But the more extensive trading was the work of the Indian traders—the *Comancheros*. The *ciboleros* hunted buffalo, and they hunted for meat.

Men who push trails into the wilderness; who live vigorous outdoor lives, must have meat. When early expeditions into New Mexico heard of the buffalo plains where "hump-backed cows" grazed in uncounted thousands, they went to hunt them. The Indians told Coronado of the buffalo, and brought him a picture of one sketched upon a piece of hide. Alvarado and twenty men were sent to the Plains.<sup>2</sup> Later Coronado crossed the buffalo country, and gave to literature one of the earliest descriptions of these animals.

Espejo found the buffalo range attracting him, and in

<sup>1</sup>Thwaites, XIX, 239-240.

<sup>2</sup>Hammond, "The Founding of New Mexico," *N. M. Historical Review*, January, 1926, p. 45.

September of 1598, Oñate sent his officer Zaldivar, with sixty men, to the Plains. They came to the Canadian country near the western border of the Panhandle. The buffalo were sluggish in appearance, and the Spaniards expected to capture some. They built a corral of logs, with wings long enough, they estimated, to hold ten thousand animals. Then they rode out to drive the buffalo in. The historian of the party described what happened.

The cattle started very nicely towards the corral, but soon they turned back in a stampede towards the men, and, rushing through them in a mass, it was impossible to stop them. . . . For several days they tried a thousand ways of shutting them in or of surrounding them, but in no manner was it possible to do so. This was not due to fear, for they are remarkably savage and ferocious, so much so they killed three of our horses and badly wounded forty.

Then Zaldivar decided to capture some calves. A number were caught, "but they became so enraged that out of the many which were being brought, some dragged by ropes and others upon the horses, not one got a league toward the camp, for they all died within about an hour." Failing in this attempt to take the animals alive, the party killed some and carried the meat back to Oñate and his men.<sup>3</sup> Thus did buffalo hunting begin with the early settlers of New Mexico.

The Spanish speaking people from the valleys of the Pecos and Rio Grande came to hunt over a wide range. A hunter's trail led to Buffalo Springs (later one of the headquarters of the XIT Ranch) thence to Agua Fria, and on into the country to the east. It was known to some of the pioneers as "the old buffalo trail."<sup>4</sup> The country about Buffalo Springs was a great hunting ground, fairly "alive with buffaloes and mustangs." Many Indian camp fires

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 445-446.

<sup>4</sup> Olive K. Dixon, *Life of Billy Dixon*, 139.

made of buffalo chips reflected their glow in the deep holes of water there. Broken flints and arrows upon the nearby hills mark the spot of desperate Indian fights, the traditions of which are kept alive by the remnants of the Plains tribes. John Skelley, an old-time buffalo hunter, says that there were several Anglo-American hunters camped there in 1878. "A long time ago," he said, "I talked to old Mexicans who told me that they hunted buffaloes at the Springs when they were boys. They said that expeditions of both Mexicans and Navajos came here from the settlements on the Rio Grande, in New Mexico, to procure their winter's meat."<sup>5</sup> Probably the first trail which was used extensively crossed from the Pecos settlements to the Canadian, and followed down the stream into Texas. This cart road was established as early as 1839,<sup>6</sup> but had probably been used years before that time. By another trail the hunters came to a point about two hundred miles south of Buffalo Springs, known as Las Casas Amarillas, or the Yellow Houses. This trail appears to have led across by Fort Sumner, probably by Portales Lake,<sup>7</sup> and if sufficient game was not found, the hunters pushed on to the breaks of the Plains. They were seen as far east as the Blanco Canyon in 1877.<sup>8</sup>

The Mexicans sometimes hunted alone, but usually they went in parties. As early as 1831, while on the Santa Fe Trail, Josiah Gregg met a hunter north of the site of Clayton, New Mexico.

"His picturesque costume [Gregg wrote] and peculiarity of deportment . . . soon showed him to be a Mexican *cibolero* or buffalo hunter. These hardy devotees of the chase

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 138-139.

<sup>6</sup>Thwaites, XX, 136.

<sup>7</sup>John R. Cook, *The Border and the Buffalo*, 220.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 246.



usually wear leather trousers and jackets, and flat straw hats; while, swung upon the shoulder of each hangs his *carcage* or quiver of bow and arrows. The long handle of their lance being set in a case, and suspended by the side with a strap from the pommel of the saddle, leaves the point waving high over the head, with a tassel of gay parti-colored stuffs dangling from the tip of the scabbard. Their fusil, if they happen to have one, is suspended in like manner at the other side, with a stopper in the muzzle fantastically tasselled."<sup>9</sup> The lance, a steel blade about fourteen inches long, was fastened to a staff seven or eight feet in length. At times the hunters used the bow and arrow, but more often the lance, with which they quickly killed enough buffalo to supply their needs.<sup>10</sup>

Hunting parties often consisted of from fifteen to twenty-five men; women were never taken on the hunts. Sometimes the meat was loaded upon burros and pack mules, but usually upon *carretas*, the cumbersome Mexican carts, drawn by slow but dependable oxen. A party of fifteen or twenty men might have from four to ten wagons, each drawn by two to four yoke of oxen. The party would have from ten to fifteen lance horses, often of race stock, very fleet,<sup>11</sup> corn-fed, trained and hardened to their work. The "meat hunts" were held in the fall by the border Mexicans, but sometimes those of the interior participated. Usually some elderly man was in charge of the hunt, which lasted from six weeks to three months.<sup>12</sup>

These hunters saved all the meat. Gregg observed in 1831 that the Mexicans "find no difficulty in curing the meat even in mid-summer, by slicing it thin and spreading or

<sup>9</sup>Thwaites, XIX, 235.

<sup>10</sup>Cook, as cited, 54; Thwaites, XIX, 240.

<sup>11</sup>Charles Goodnight to J. Evetts Haley, April 8, 1927.

<sup>12</sup>Cook, as cited, 54.

suspending it in the sun; or, if in haste, it is slightly barbecued. During the curing operation they often follow the Indian practice of beating or kneading the slices with their feet, which they contend contributes to its preservation." The Santa Fe traders dried, or jerked, meat in much the same way. They strung lines on either side of their wagons, draped the strips of meat over these, and left them to dry until ready to pack away.<sup>13</sup> After the meat was thoroughly jerked it would keep indefinitely.

John R. Cook, upon the invitation of Antonio Romero, joined a party of *ciboleros* at Glorieta in 1874. They left Romero's ranch in October, came by Bernal Springs, and thence to Fort Bascom. There they met another party from Galisteo, New Mexico. They found the first buffalo north of the Canadian at Blue Water, or as the Mexicans called it, *Agua Azul*. Getting the wind on the buffaloes, the hunters raced out at full speed from behind a knoll, their horses excited and eager, the hunters leaning forward, lances ready for action. The buffaloes were lying down, not two hundred yards away, and the riders were among the animals before the latter were fairly started in flight. Each Mexican rode close beside a buffalo, made a quick thrust behind the shoulder, jerked out the lance, rode to the next buffalo and so on until his horse was winded. Sixteen buffaloes were killed in a few minutes.<sup>14</sup> It was sport that quickened the blood of both hunter and horse, in colorful contrast to the business-like slaughter by the Anglo-American, who "still hunted" with a rifle.

Charles Goodnight, the noted pioneer who established the first ranch in the Panhandle, was making a trip from Colorado to his Palo Duro ranch in 1877. Near the junction

<sup>13</sup> Thwaites, XIX, 240.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 54-58.



of the Tierra Blanca and Palo Duro creeks he rode, late one evening, up to a *cibolero's* camp. The hunter's effects were packed upon a wagon but his heart was with his horse, a fast pony, well-kept. Love of horseflesh among men, whatever the diverse racial stocks, bespeaks a certain kinship, and prairie hospitality ever broke its bread and poured its black coffee with cordial abandon. The pioneer of more than one widely known cattle trail sat down in camp with a New Mexican who counted his horse his wealth.

Early the next morning six large buffalo bulls came by, headed north. The Mexican ran for his horse, saddled, and was quickly in pursuit. Within less than six hundred yards he pulled his pony up. Six dead buffalo attested the skill of the hunter and the quality of the steed.<sup>15</sup> In less than fifteen minutes his season's hunt was done. Soon dusky little tots would run from a squat adobe on the Pecos to welcome the hunter home, and the meat of the *cibolo*, mixed well with *chili*, would warm little Mexican stomachs long hungry for *carne*.

Such hunting was dangerous. A wounded buffalo might "horn" some too eager horse; a running pony might step in a prairie dog hole to receive a hard fall; and sometimes a man was killed when his lance failed to pull out. Once a Mexican named Trujillo, who lived at Tascosa, was on a hunt and when he made the thrust the handle of his lance splintered. His horse continued to run alongside the buffalo and pressed so closely against the animal's side that the sharp end of the handle pushed through the rider's abdomen. This was Trujillo's last hunt. His horse had been trained too well.<sup>16</sup> Though the Anglo-American hunters objected to the Mexican method of killing because it stirred

<sup>15</sup> C. Goodnight to J. E. H., as cited.

<sup>16</sup> Wm. Balfour to J. E. H., July 29, 1926.

the buffaloes up and set them to moving,<sup>17</sup> the Mexicans continued coming to the Plains as late as 1882, or until all the buffaloes were gone. One party of hunters was seen on the Running Water that year, and in spite of the improvements in firearms, they continued to hunt with lances.<sup>18</sup>

While the *ciboleros* came to hunt, the *Comancheros* came to trade with the Indians for robes, for horses, and for cattle. As long as the Comanches enjoyed the freedom of the Plains, the *Comancheros* plied their not especially voluminous but significant trade.

This trade had evidently flourished for more than a century. The chronicler of S. H. Long's explorations of 1820 wrote that "The Indians of this region seem to have had intercourse with the Spaniards from a very early date." A man named Brevel, born among the Caddo, told John Sibley in 1805 "that he had visited Santa Fe forty years previous." By 1820 there was an Indian trail to Santa Fe, supposedly from the Pawnee Picts village on Red River.<sup>19</sup> The trade seems to have been very well established by this time. Major Long met a party of Kaskaskias, or Bad Hearts, as the French called them, on their way from a hunt on the Colorado and Brazos to meet the Spanish traders near the head waters of the Canadian.<sup>20</sup>

The first traders may have come for buffalo robes alone. But soon livestock proved an important item, and the Indians quickly learned how profitable it was to steal horses, and then cattle, from the western frontier of Texas as well as from the northern border of Mexico. During the decade of 1830-1840, Gregg wrote that the traders, "usually composed of the indigent and rude classes of the frontier

<sup>17</sup> George Simpson to J. E. H., July 18, 1926.

<sup>18</sup> Harry Ingerton to J. E. H., April 13, 1927.

<sup>19</sup> Thwaites, XVI, 95.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

villages . . . collect together several times a year, and launch upon the plains with a few trinkets and trumperies of all kinds, and perhaps a bag of bread and another of *pinole*," which they bartered for horses and mules. Rarely the entire stock of a trader exceeded twenty dollars in value.<sup>21</sup> In later years they brought ammunition, lead, paint, beads, knives, *manta* or calico, and other articles essential to the Indian toilet and boudoir. The Indian possessed little the trader desired except the stock he had pilfered from these two frontiers, which the Mexicans secured at very low cost. Goodnight knew two retired army lieutenants in New Mexico who furnished articles of trade to the Mexicans and received stock in payment. One said that the cattle he received from the trade cost him about two dollars and a half apiece.

The poorer traders brought a few burro loads of goods and traded for but a few head, ten to fifty. The more well-to-do brought their articles of trade in *carretas* and wagons, and sometimes traded for as many as five hundred head. Often the cattle received, well broken to the trail by the time the Indians delivered them, were driven on to New Mexico by Mexicans on foot.<sup>22</sup>

It appears that wherever the Indian and Mexican met, there was the "stock" exchange, there the market-place. It was sometimes Santa Fe and sometimes around the source of the Canadian. In 1839 Gregg saw that the trader was "content to wander about for several months," finally to "return home with a mule or two, as the proceeds of his traffic."<sup>23</sup> But when the trade in stolen cattle and horses assumed greater proportions definite meeting places were established. Stealing in wholesale measure from the

<sup>21</sup> Thwaites XX, 137-138.

<sup>22</sup> Charles Goodnight to J. E. H., November 13, 1926.

<sup>23</sup> Thwaites, XX, 137-138, See Kendall, *The Santa Fe Expedition*, I, 262.

northwest fringe of Texas settlement began shortly before the Civil War. Both cattle and horses were driven northwest to meet the Mexican traders.

This exchange, according to Charles Goodnight, began northwest of where Amarillo now stands at a spring called Las Tecovas, (perhaps a corruption of *techados*) a name of reputed Indian origin meaning "the tents." Later it became the headquarters of the Frying Pan Ranch, an eastern neighbor of the XIT, of which Henry B. Sanborn was one of the owners. The spring came to be called after him. According to tradition the valley of Tascosa Creek was once the scene of trading in cattle and horses.<sup>24</sup> But the place of meeting was shifted southeast to a fork of the Pease River, just below the caprock. Here developed the greatest trading ground in the history of Plains cattle theft. For ten years after the close of the Civil War the trade continued.<sup>25</sup> While Washington theorized, cattlemen were losing their stock, reserving their driest powder for the Indians, and venting their choicest profanity on the politicians.

The head of the Brazos was a favorite camping place of the Indians, as they returned from their raids into the San Saba and Llano country. There they stopped to rest and recruit their stolen stock before continuing into New Mexico, or turning northeast to Indian Territory. This camping place was discovered by General R. S. Mackenzie's expedition of 1872.<sup>26</sup>

When Goodnight came in to establish his ranch "the roads of the Mexican traders were almost as big and plain as the roads of today." There was a north and south trade road. The north one left Las Vegas, where the traders outfitted, led northeast to the Canadian, followed down it to

<sup>24</sup>James H. East to J. E. H., September 29, 1927.

<sup>25</sup>Charles Goodnight to J. E. H., January 26, 1926.

<sup>26</sup>*Galveston News*, October 22, 1874.

turn southeast about a day's drive from the Trujillo, near the state line. The traders left the river and pulled for the Door of the Plains, a large gap in the caprock which could be seen for miles. They watered at the Trujillo and then at the extreme head of the Palo Duro, in the XIT range. The trail led down this stream to near the site of Canyon, and turned south to strike the Tule above the breaks at Mackenzie Crossing. It led southeast again to the head of Rock Creek, thence to the foot of the Plains, by some springs, and on to the Tongue River. The southern trail came back by the same route to Mackenzie Crossing, from where it turned west to Las Escarbas, where one of the divisional headquarters of the XIT was later located. The name means "the scrapings." Here the Mexicans scraped out little pits in the sand and thus secured water. The trail led to Laguna Salada, thence to La Laguna, eight miles north of Fort Sumner, and eight miles farther to join the main government road which led from the Fort to Santa Fe. From this road the traders dropped off to their homes.<sup>27</sup>

The Kiowas and Comanches found good sport in keeping all the horses stolen from the cowmen along the outer edge, and cattle could be stolen much more quickly than they could be raised. Down the trails from Santa Fe and Las Vegas came the New Mexican traders, across the Plains to camp and await the coming of the Indians after the 'light of the moon' . . . <sup>28</sup> Indians of various tribes and dialects, Anglo-Americans, and Mexicans gathered at this great exchange ground in the valley of the stream. In order to carry on the barter, the traders or their interpreters were forced to speak several different languages or *lenguas*—tongues. So the stream came to be known as Las Lenguas;

<sup>27</sup> C. Goodnight to J. E. H., November 13, 1926.

<sup>28</sup> The Indians made their raids when the moon was full; hence the pioneer expression.



then the name was anglicized, and today the river upon which so many stolen cattle changed hands is known as the Tongue.

In 1867 Colonel Charles Goodnight found six hundred head of his own cattle in one bunch on Gallinas Creek, New Mexico. They had been stolen from near old Fort Belknap and traded to the Mexicans. He went into court at Las Vegas in an attempt to recover them. Not only were his efforts fruitless, but it cost him seventy-five dollars to get out of court. He left with the "undisputed evidence" that at least 300,000 head of cattle had been stolen from the Texas frontier and sold to the New Mexicans during the war,<sup>29</sup> and, also, probably with a firmer conviction of what should be done with cattle thieves.<sup>30</sup>

Jose Pena, once a trader, was on the trail with Goodnight in 1875. He told of a trip he made to the Quitaque. No cattle were there. He met a chief who told him to let his Indians have the goods, and the cattle would be there shortly. Pena was afraid to refuse to let his Indians have the goods, though he supposed he would never receive the cattle once he turned over the goods. But in a week or two the cattle were brought in, and Pena happily went his way.<sup>31</sup> There were times, however, when the Indians traded, and then forcibly took possession of the animals they had transferred to the Mexicans, before those unfortunates had time to reach their homes.<sup>32</sup>

Stealing from the Texas frontier became difficult, and the Indians were placed upon the reservation. The government, which is said to have encouraged the trade during the Civil War because of the harm it would do Confederate Texas, opposed it afterward.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Charles Goodnight to J. E. H., February 19, 1927.

<sup>30</sup> J. Frank Dobie, *Texas and Southwestern Lore*.

<sup>31</sup> C. Goodnight to J. E. H., April 8, 1927.

<sup>32</sup> Thwaites, XX, 137.

<sup>33</sup> C. Goodnight to J. E. H., November 13, 1926.

To what extent the depredations upon the Texas frontier were due to this Indian trade would be difficult to determine, but certainly the traders furnished the Indians with the means of hunting and the market for their stolen stock. The animals trafficked away had to be replaced by new levies, and the greater the trade, the more serious the inroads upon the Texas settlements became.<sup>34</sup>

The traders usually made good guides, but Gregg found them the opposite. "They will tell you [he wrote] that you may arrive at a given place by the time the sun reached a certain point; otherwise, whether it be but half a mile or half a day's ride to the place inquired for, they are apt to apply *esta cerquita* (it is close by), or *esta lejos* (it is far off), to the one as to the other, just as the impression happens to strike them. . . ."<sup>35</sup> They may have been deficient in giving directions, but they were proficient in guiding. General R. S. Mackenzie used some of these old traders as guides. One was a half-breed named Johnson whom he secured at Fort Concho.<sup>36</sup> Another who acted in like capacity was Jose Piedad. Speaking of him, Colonel Goodnight said: "He was a wonder. He knew the Plains from the Palo Duro to the Concho by heart. When the Mexicans know a country, they are great guides."<sup>37</sup>

The man who guided Mackenzie to the Indian camp in Tule Canyon was a trader named Jose Tefoya. He was out on a trading trip and was captured by Mackenzie. The old campaigner started to kill him, but decided he might be of help.<sup>38</sup> It is said that Mackenzie propped up a wagon

<sup>34</sup>See R. B. Marcy, *The Exploration of Red River*, 105-106; Charles Goodnight to J. E. H., November 13, 1926.

<sup>35</sup>Thwaites, XX, 140.

<sup>36</sup>Charles P. Hatfield, Ms., *Account of the Mackenzie Battle*, Panhandle Plains Historical Society, Canyon, Texas.

<sup>37</sup>C. Goodnight to J. E. H. April 8, 1927.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*

tongue and hanged Tefoya to it long enough to induce him to talk.<sup>39</sup> Hemp and a hangman's noose have long been conducive to speech, and the last time Jose was allowed to touch ground, he agreed to lead the troops to the Indians, with the result that the Comanches suffered a serious defeat. Quanah Parker, one of the Comanche chiefs, heard that Tefoya had betrayed the Indians, and he told Goodnight he would broil the Mexican alive if he ever caught him.<sup>40</sup> Tefoya found the New Mexico climate superior ever after.

For hundreds of years wild mustangs roamed the Plains in untold thousands, and among the Mexicans to visit the Llano Estacado were a few horse hunters whom the Texans termed "mustangers." The usual method of capturing horses was by "walking them down." Sometimes this was too slow for the Mexicans and they resorted to other maneuvers. A party of sixteen left Fort Sumner to steal horses from the Indians in 1875. Celdon Trujillo, an old horse wrangler who now lives at Fort Sumner, was with the party. They went by Portales, Casas Amarillas, and south from there some eighty miles. When they failed to find Indian ponies, all but seven of the party returned. The others continued their search, but were discovered by Colonel W. B. Shafter, who was on a scout of the South Plains. Shafter suspected and arrested the Mexicans and held them until he reached the Pecos, near the site of Carlsbad, New Mexico.<sup>41</sup>

The year before an Indian band stole 200 head of horses from the Maxwells at Fort Sumner. A party of seventy-three men, mostly Mexicans, set out in pursuit. The Indians headed southeast down the plainly beaten traders'

<sup>39</sup> Frank Lloyd to J. E. H., August 18, 1927.

<sup>40</sup> C. Goodnight to J. E. H., April 8, 1927.

<sup>41</sup> Celdon Trujillo to J. E. H., June 24, 1927.

trail that led by Portales and Salt Lake to Casas Amarillas. There the Indians were caught and four hundred head of horses taken from them.<sup>42</sup> But this was not the characteristic role of the "mustanger." His methods were less hazardous and more certain of results.

The region about the Yellow Houses, later a part of the XIT Ranch, was a great mustang country. In the early spring of 1878 eight Mexicans came from San Miguel to catch horses. They pitched camp at Laguna Rica, some eight miles from the Yellow Houses. They wanted mares and brought twenty head of saddle horses to use in capturing them. The mustangs ran in bands, each led by a stallion that had fought his way to supremacy.

The Mexicans picked out a band and started two men toward them. They rode at a walk. When the wild stallion scented or saw the riders, he trotted out to examine them more closely. When assured of danger, he whirled and sped to his band, and by biting and squealing forced his mares into a run and then took the lead. Away they went, generally for three to five miles. The horsemen dropped in behind. After the band had stopped the stallion again dropped to the rear, and when the riders came near he started his mares again.

Mustangs had a favorite range which they would scarcely leave; therefore, on the second run they often described a big circle to swing back toward the point from which they started, and thus might travel fifteen or twenty miles before they stopped the second time.

When the direction of the circle was determined, two other riders would start out and cross an arc of the circle. Another would do the same outside the circle; then one man would take two extra horses, hurry across the circle and intercept the first riders with fresh horses and

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*

a supply of *tortillas*, *carne*, and *agua* (bread, meat, and water). Another would station himself, with four extra horses, as near to the circle as caution and convenience would allow.

As the circle had once been completed, the horsemen adjusted themselves accordingly. The wild horses were kept on the move as much as possible both day and night.

The horsemen would drop in behind the wild horses at intervals; but they were always in a walk. Thus it was called walking them down.<sup>43</sup>

By the third day the old weak horses dropped out, and by the fourth the others were becoming "leg-weary." At times the stallion, enraged by the persistence of the riders, turned upon them and was shot. As the horses grew more weary they might attempt to stop or lie down. The *vaquero*, using his *riata* as a black-snake, cut hair and hide and the animal struggled on. Usually the horses were kept moving through the fourth night and perhaps longer.

Upon this particular hunt all the Mexicans were upon hand with their lariats when the morning of the fifth day came. Each mare was roped and thrown, and with a knife the Mexicans severed a small ligament in the foreleg of each animal and let out the joint-water. Then the mustangs were branded and released. This treatment stiffened both forelegs so that one herder was able to care for the band and drive it to water and to grass. When the Mexicans had caught all they wanted the horses were herded until the knees healed and then were driven into New Mexico. A Mexican named Valdez was in charge of this party which secured thirty-five head of mares from eighty head of horses walked down.<sup>44</sup>

The American mustangers, who came after the Mexicans, used a different method. After walking the mustangs down,

<sup>43</sup> Cook, as cited 254.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254-255.





THE FIRST XIT STEERS WERE LONG OF HORN AND LEG



HEADQUARTERS OF THE RITO BLANCO DIVISION, WHERE A NUMBER OF RUSTLERS GATHERED TO KILL COLONEL BOYCE

clogs, which prevented the horses from running, were usually substituted for the knee cut. But before the American horse hunter arrived the sheep owners were to have brief but rather peaceful use of the grasses along the western edge.

Almost by the time the trading was over, and before the *ciboleros* had stopped visiting the Plains, Mexican sheepmen were pushing down the Canadian into Texas. This movement seems to have gathered some force in 1876. No sheep appeared in 1875, but when Goodnight, moving down from Colorado that year, stopped at Rincón de las Piedras, a rocky bend in the river just above the state line, flocks totalling about 100,000 head gathered around him for protection from the Indians. Goodnight told his cowboys to hold range enough for his herd, but not to molest the sheepmen. One day when Leigh Dyer, the foreman, was away, a sheep herd came into the range which Goodnight held. Dave McCormick, one of the cowboys, had no love for anything that savored of mutton, and "wanted to drown the whole damn outfit."

"There was a Scotchman by the name of J. C. Johnson with my herd," Colonel Goodnight said, "who did not know anything about stock. They started to move the sheep, and he asked McCormick where to put them. McCormick pointed to the river and said: 'Why, put them in here, of course.'"

Johnson faithfully followed instructions, and some four hundred were drowned. McCormick's aversion to sheep had been served, but his employer paid the bill.<sup>45</sup> Though neither cowman nor sheepman owned the country, Goodnight, who had previously decided to abandon the Canadian range, made an agreement with the Mexicans that he

<sup>45</sup> C. Goodnight to J. E. H., April 8, 1927.

would leave this to them, and they in turn were to stay off the Palo Duro. Only two Mexicans transgressed this agreement. Leigh Dyer took the double of his lariat and whipped one, and it is said on good authority that he never came back. An outlaw killed the other herder for his horses, and thereby hangs the legend of the naming of the Sierrita de la Cruz.<sup>46</sup>

The first sheep outfits formed no permanent settlements. They made great circuits, swinging out into the Panhandle from their New Mexican ranges, following good grass and adequate water. Many sheep were wintered on Cañoncito and the Tule, and even as far east as the Quitaque, until that country was taken up as a cattle range. Flocks ranged along the Canadian and its tributaries on either side. At times the owners placed two or three big bunches of sheep on a circuit together. They were in charge of a *majordomo*, a man who rode from one herd to another and directed their care and movements. Fine, ferocious dogs, apparently crossed with the wolf, aided the herders. At night the flock was thrown together, and the herders slept in the center. The dogs were left in charge and no animal nor man could enter the herd without killing them. A cart was rarely if ever taken along. The *pastores* lived mainly upon meat, and pack burros carried what provisions they had together with their scanty bedding of skins and rags.<sup>47</sup>

Often the trip into the Panhandle began early in the year and the flocks reached Texas by lambing time. In the fall they might be driven back to their old ranges. When the sheep were wintered in Texas, they were drifted back towards the settlements for shearing. Sometimes they were sheared fifty or sixty miles out, and large wagons transported the wool to market.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, November 13, 1927.

<sup>47</sup>C. Goodnight to J. E. H., April 8, 1927.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*; J. E. McAllister to J. E. H., July 1, 1926.



One Padre Green had a big adobe wool store-house on the Rito Blanco, in the XIT range.<sup>49</sup> A surveying party in 1880 found flocks numbering 5,000 on the farther reaches of Red River. They were watered at pits dug in the bed of the stream.<sup>50</sup> An Englishman by the name of A. B. Ledgard had a big sheep ranch on the Alamocitos as late as 1882,<sup>51</sup> and Pueblo Baca operated heavily in sheep, as did Mariano Montoya, the first clerk of Oldham County. The Armijo family, too, were prominent sheepmen. Their flocks grazed the Panhandle and were driven to Dodge City to be shipped to market. O. H. Nelson, pioneer breeder and dealer in registered Herefords, saw the Armijos there with 20,000 head in 1881.<sup>52</sup> These early sheepmen were the precursors of Mexican settlement.

Three Mexican families settled on the river in Oldham county to start the town of Tascosa in 1877.<sup>53</sup> Other plazas were started, one just across the river from Tascosa, where Juan Domingo and Victoria Ventura were the leading citizens. About a mile and a half down the river a little settlement of four or five families sprung up on Arroyo Pescado, or Fish Creek, and assumed the Spanish name of the stream. Some three miles below was Casino, of like urban pretensions, the most eastern settlement of the Mexicans.<sup>54</sup>

Above Tascosa, and just below the state line the plaza of Salinas held a more generous quota of Mexican families, perhaps twenty-five in all. It was located near a saline lake, where crude means of extracting the salt were in use.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup>*Frontier Times*, August, 1925, p. 14.

<sup>51</sup>*Prospectus*, 1882, p. 21; Alamocitos, or Little Cottonwoods, has been spelled Alamositas on the ranch maps.

<sup>52</sup> Harry Ingerton, as cited; O. H. Nelson to J. E. H., February 26, 1927.

<sup>53</sup> J. Evetts Haley, Ms., "Old Tascosa," Panhandle-Plains Historical Society.

<sup>54</sup> Harry Ingerton, as cited.



Mexicans came from all over eastern New Mexico, each to secure his supply.<sup>56</sup> Salinas had stores and saloons, attractions not possessed by most of the other settlements. To the east, at the mouth of Chaves Canyon, another plaza was founded, known as Chaves. Rude plows made of forked limbs, tipped with a shaft of iron, barely stirred the soil enough to permit of planting, and irrigation ditches carried the waters of Chaves to the fields. Between Chaves and Tascosa was the plaza of Joaquin. The inhabitants of these little settlements held their land by "squatter's right," just as did the first cowmen.<sup>56</sup>

There was little hard feeling between the cowman and the sheepman in the Texas Panhandle. There might have been, but when cattle came the sheepmen drifted back into New Mexico. There was no open conflict.<sup>57</sup> By 1883, or at the latest, 1884, the drifting outfits had ceased to visit the country,<sup>58</sup> and the plazas became deserted piles of adobe,<sup>59</sup> where the pack rat engaged in the occupation that gives him his name, where the norther whistled through rooms once resonant with the tunes of old Castile, and where silence no longer even echoed the melody of Latin voices once attuned to strumming guitars. The deserted villages of the Canadian were the last vestiges of Spanish influence but one. The place-names of the country are essentially Spanish in flavor, and form the last trace of a life long gone.

All the more prominent landmarks, the creeks, rivers, and canyons of the Plains country were named by Spanish traders and hunters, and delightfully reminiscent of a romantic period are such names as *Los Brazos de Dios*, *Sierrita de la Cruz*, *Palo Duro*, and *Punta de Agua*. How strikingly in

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Frank Mitchell to J. E. H., December 1, 1926.

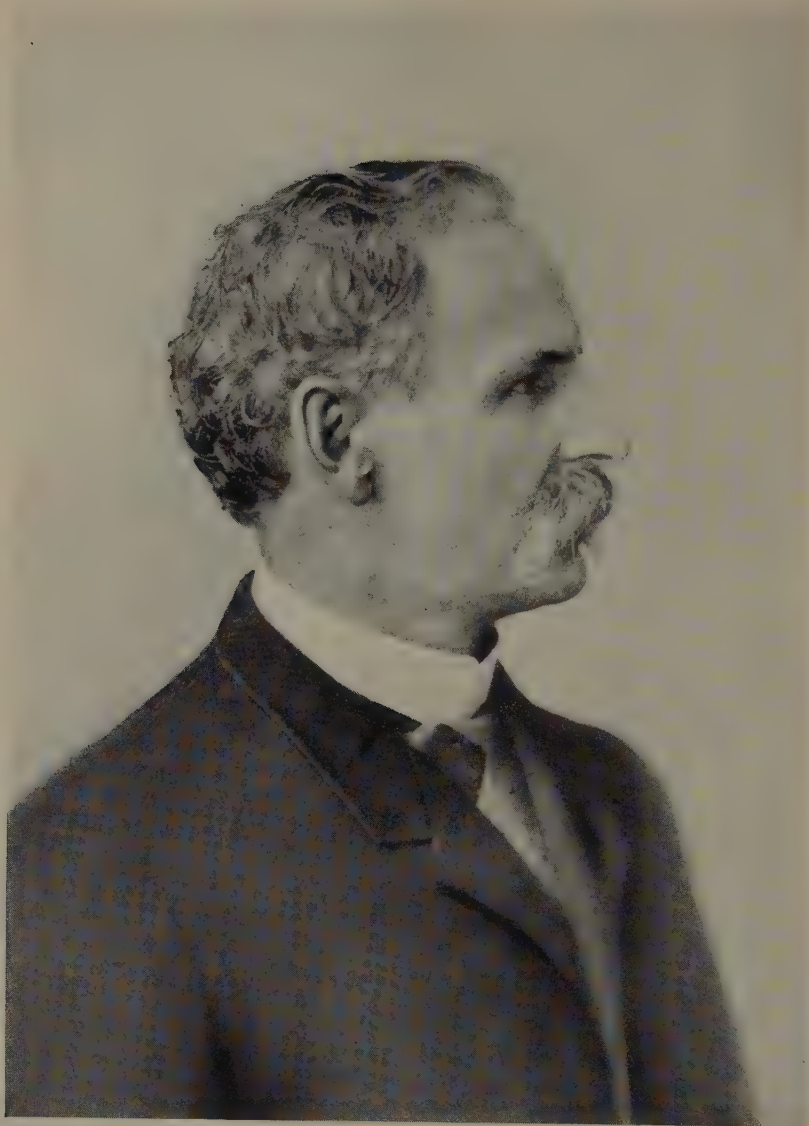
<sup>57</sup> J. E. McAllister to J. E. H., July 1, 1926.

<sup>58</sup> A. L. Turner to J. E. H., July 2, 1926.

<sup>59</sup> W. S. Mabry, Ms., "Recollections of the XIT Ranch," p. 16, Chicago office files.



THE OLD TEXAS CAPITOL WHICH BURNED IN NOVEMBER, 1881



ABNER TAYLOR, OF TAYLOR, BABCOCK AND COMPANY, SUPERVISED THE  
BUILDING OF THE TEXAS STATE HOUSE

contrast the names of a few other streams—Dry River, Sod House, and Skunk Creek—how fragrantly American!

The great plateau was named *Los Llanos Estacados*, the Staked Plains. To the Mexicans it was an impediment to travel, but penetrable; to the pioneers from the Atlantic, it was a part of the Great American Desert, unknown and feared. At some early day the Mexican pathfinders of the Southwest named the region, and many stories account for the origin of the name.

Among the most common explanations is that which came to Josiah Gregg in the thirties.

I have been assured by Mexican hunters and Indians [he wrote] that, from Santa Fe southeastward, there is but one route upon which this plain can be safely traversed during the dry season; and even some of the watering-places on this are at intervals of fifty or eighty miles, and hard to find. Hence the Mexican traders and hunters, that they might not lose their way and perish from thirst, once staked out this route across the plain, it is said; whence it has received the name of El Llano Estacado.<sup>60</sup>

Of a similar nature is the unauthenticated story that Spanish padres came down from Santa Fe in 1734 "to establish a fort and mission" at San Saba, setting stakes along the way, upon which they placed buffalo skulls, that they might be seen at a distance.<sup>61</sup>

A legend relating to the Indians differs widely from the current Spanish stories. According to this tradition there once existed a terrible feud between the Pueblo and other mountain tribes of the West and the fierce Comanches of the Plains. The war was long, devastating, and demoralizing to the mountain tribes. Finally the wise men of the Pueblos "made medicine" and caught a vision. A great chief was to come from beyond the Plains and deliver them from their blood-thirsty foes.

<sup>60</sup> Thwaites, XX, 239-240.

<sup>61</sup> Thrall, Homer S., *A Pictorial History of Texas*, 40; San Saba was established in 1757.

Thereafter the Pueblos journeyed to the western breaks of the plateau once each year and as far out upon the Plains as common sense, sharpened by fear of the Comanches, would allow. At the end of their journey they buried with tribal unction and great ceremony the "social fire" brought from their sanctuary in the mountains. This done they back-trailed to their mountain retreats, setting up stakes to guide the great chief who was expected to come out of the land of the rising sun. Early Spanish explorers are said to have found the stakes and to have named the plateau.<sup>62</sup> For the unimaginative and the coldly practical who wonder how the chief was to find his way to the eastern extremity of the staked trail, the legend does not provide.

The old guides localized the Staked Plains by calling the plains after the rivers that drained them. Around Yellow House Canyon there were *Los Llanos del Casas Amarillas*; around the Running Water, *Los Llanos del Agua Corriente*, and so on. All the country looked much alike to the average man, but in this way the old guides could describe any part of the Plains well enough to direct a traveler.<sup>63</sup> The names of some of the divisions and pastures of the XIT Ranch further illustrate the extent of the Spanish influence.

Where the South Plains vacillate between pampa and rolling sand dune country near the 103rd meridian, there arises one tributary of the Brazos, Las Casas Amarillas, the Yellow Houses—the location of one division of the XIT. Near the head of this canyon, which gashes across the South Plains, was an alkaline lake of like designation, an important landmark of the Llanos fifty years ago. Bordering the lake are some high bluffs of yellowish hue, which

<sup>62</sup> *The Midland (Texas) Gazette*, March 18, 1904.

<sup>63</sup> C. Goodnight to J. E. H., April 8, 1927.



may be seen at considerable distance and which from certain points of view have somewhat the appearance of the walls of a great city, "especially when seen through a good mirage." In the face of the bluffs were several caves, where Captain G. W. Arrington and a squad of rangers, back from an Indian scout into the sand hills of the southwest, took refuge to escape being frozen to death in a blizzard of 1879.<sup>64</sup> Tradition relates that the "entire Sioux nation" came down from the north in the late forties to fight an alliance of the Comanche, Kiowa, and Arapaho Indians, and that at Casas Amarillas they fell to battle with a vengeance. Twenty years later, in 1877, a stone breastwork might be traced crescent-wise upon the brow of the bluff. What more proof should legend demand!<sup>65</sup>

Other names distinctly Spanish—*Ojo Bravo*, *Alamocitos*, *Las Escarbadas*, *Rito Blanco*, and *Punta de Agua*—connote adventurous and hopeful *Comancheros*, hard-riding *ciboleros*, and great sheep herds tended by patient *pastores*. Long years have passed since the last of these disappeared, but happily the heritage of names will last down the years.

<sup>64</sup> J. Evetts Haley, "Lore of the Llano Estacado," from *Texas and Southwestern Lore*, Austin, 1927.

<sup>65</sup> Cook, as cited, 208.



## CHAPTER III

### *First Ranches of the Panhandle-Plains Country*

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THE Texas cowboy originated in the southern part of the State. Barely had the Mexican rule been broken than adventurous souls, who rode like drunken Indians and fought like devils, were pushing into the country between the Nueces and the Rio Grande, that strip which lay so long a bone of contention between the two republics. The Mexican *rancheros*, fleeing after the defeat of Santa Anna, left their herds behind them. The Texans, hating all Mexicans and disregarding the rights of any Mexican to hold property on Texas soil, raided down on these longhorn cattle of the border, captured them, and began driving them to Louisiana to market. Thus the occupation and name of the Texas cowboy had its beginning.<sup>1</sup>

The Texas cattle industry was just taking form at the end of the Revolution. It assumed definite shape in the forties, and made tremendous expansion between 1850 and 1855.<sup>2</sup> It rapidly pushed back the Indian frontiers of the state to the north and west so that at the outbreak of the Civil War the frontier approximated a direct line from Gainesville in North Texas to Laredo on the Rio Grande. During the conflict, expansion gave place to recession, the frontier line wavered, and in many places receded before

<sup>1</sup>J. Evetts Haley, Ms., "A Survey of Texas Cattle Drives to the North, 1866-1895," pp. 51-56. (Thesis, University of Texas.)

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 68.

Indian depredations. The cattle industry went into chaos. With the close of the war, men who had won fame with Lee and Terry returned to find their stocks scattered, outlawry rife, government a farce, and their property worthless. Then they took the saddle for the "cow hunt," the rifle and sixshooter for the Indian, and the lariat and a short shrift for the outlaw. They blazed trails a thousand to two thousand miles in length, and, driving millions of Texas cattle before them, extended the pastoral frontier to more northern states and territories. Out of chaos they brought order, out of outlawry law, and out of poverty prosperity.

Again the pastoral frontier of Texas pushed out, and, as the decade of the seventies passed the meridian, it pressed against the caprock of the Plains. Within a few years, ranches were established upon the Llano Estacado. Immediately almost it was seen that cattle grew larger than upon any other Texas ranges.

When the first "saddle-warmers" reached the Plains the Indian problem, which had worried Texas since the beginning of settlement, was just a thing of the past. Men could now possess the land with moderate comfort and little danger.

Before the Panhandle country was settled Texas cowmen, advancing along the Goodnight-Loving Trail, had located ranches through eastern New Mexico from along the Pecos Valley to the farther waters of the Cimarron. Among those to cross the Ratons and push into Colorado was Charles Goodnight.<sup>3</sup> He located in Pueblo County on the Arkansas River in 1869, the first Texan to enter the cattle business in the southern part of that state. There the outlaws became numerous and vicious, and the cowmen

<sup>3</sup> W. R. Owen to J. E. H., August 12, 1927; O. H. Nelson to J. E. H., February 26, 1927; James Jones to J. E. H., January 13, 1927; Charles Goodnight to J. E. H., November 13, 1926.

brought order by vigorous measures. One characteristic of these pioneers looms large, they were law and order men. As the country became over-stocked some of the Colorado cowmen looked towards the Texas Panhandle.

Goodnight, the first to come, was schooled to the frontier. He had scouted over much of the Plains country as a Texas Ranger and realized its grazing possibilities. He moved his herd from Pueblo, Colorado, and wintered on the Canadian in 1875. Leigh Dyer, the boss of the outfit, was sent to scout out the country to the southeast and choose the best range he could find. A Mexican guide accompanied him, and his own qualities as an excellent frontiersman were supplemented by the counsel of Goodnight, imparted before he left the Canadian.

Dyer rode over much country, chose the Palo Duro, and in November of 1876 the herd of 1,600 head was placed on the new range. This, the beginning of settlement, was a marked event in the history of northwest Texas. Other seekers of grass rapidly followed. Cattle grew fat on ten thousand hills and soon the rustler flourished at his chosen calling.

Thomas S. Bugbee was the second to come. He left the Arkansas River in extreme western Kansas, and came to settle upon the creek that now bears his name, just north of where Plemons is located and but a few miles from the Canadian.<sup>4</sup> There he built a dugout with a buffalo hide for a door, and he and his cowboys used their sixshooters to keep the buffaloes scared off their range, while Goodnight, to the south, was maintaining a line which his cowboys rode daily, turning back from a thousand to fifteen hundred buffaloes, and thus saving the grass for their cattle.<sup>5</sup> The

<sup>4</sup> T. S. Bugbee to J. E. H., July 17, 1925.

<sup>5</sup> Ms., "Recollections of Charles Goodnight," Panhandle-Plains Historical Society.

way had been opened from the north, and more cowmen followed.

"Deacon" Bates and David T. Beal, millionaire shoe manufacturers of Boston, felt the lure of the open range, for at that time the bawl of a steer was akin to the jingle of silver. They built up the great LX Ranch with first headquarters on Pitcher Creek, about twenty miles north of the site of Amarillo. They consistently refused to join the Panhandle Stock Association, apparently because of the questionable increase of their herds, sold at the peak of the boom to the American Pastoral Company in 1884, and retreated to their Boston homes to enjoy the culture of the Hub. But "Deacon" Bates was not through with Texas. He was arrested, extradition granted, and Captain G. W. Arrington brought him back to Mobeetie to stand trial for cattle theft. He was released after the Association had spent five thousand dollars prosecuting the case, but the fight had a wholesome effect.<sup>6</sup>

Just to the west, and up the river from the LX's, the LIT outfit came in. It was owned by George W. Littlefield, a Texas cowman of the old order. His first herd of 3,500 head of Texas cattle was turned loose and the ranch headquarters was established at a dugout about four miles below Tascosa. Soon a Mexican's place on the Cheyenne was bought, and the ranch was then located two miles above the little town.<sup>7</sup> Still farther up the river came Old Man Torrey, another who left the baked beans of Boston for the frijoles of Texas. Above him, just inside the Texas line, the LE Ranch was located by W. M. D. Lee and E. A. Reynolds, extensive buyers of buffalo robes and noted Indian traders and freighters of the Southwest.

<sup>6</sup> O. H. Nelson to J. E. H., July 13, 1926; Charles Goodnight to J. E. H., April 8, 1927.

<sup>7</sup> J. Phelps White to J. E. H., January 15, 1927.



Contemporaneously, cattlemen were settling farther down the river. In 1878, W. T. and G. T. Reynolds came in from Las Animas County, Colorado, wintered on Chicken Creek, and sold their cattle next spring to Charles Goodnight. Hank W. Cresswell, a Canadian and a remarkable character, came from Pueblo County, Colorado, the same year, and located about twenty-five miles east of Adobe Walls to start the well-known  $\overline{cc}$  (Bar C's) Ranch. In 1879, R. L. McNulty came from near Fort Griffin with the  $\wedge$  (Turkey Track) brand, later bought out by the Hansford Land and Cattle Company, and W. E. Anderson released his  $\sphericalangle$  (Scissors) brand nearby, and started the Adobe Walls Ranch. Huff, Mell, and Frank Wright crowded into the Canadian country of the central Panhandle, farther to the east, Nick Eaton appeared from Central Texas during the same year, and Robert Moody trailed in from Colorado to locate near the future site of Canadian, Texas, with the PO brand.<sup>8</sup>

As steers long shut in a corral rush headlong to water and grass when the bars are let down, so the cattlemen stampeded into the country along the Canadian, and in a very few years the adjacent ranges were occupied from New Mexico down into Indian Territory. Here in the Panhandle-Plains country the lines of settlement were scattered, predetermined by the water supply. Near the northwest corner of the Panhandle there was a cow camp at Buffalo Springs before 1878, maintained by cattlemen along the Cimarron and the Beaver. Some adobes had been built, either by Bill Hall of Kansas City or Dan Taylor of Trinidad, or perhaps by both. There they kept winter lineriders to push back cattle drifting to the south.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup>O. H. Nelson to J. E. H., August 15, 1925; Charles Goodnight to J. E. H., September 16, 1927.

<sup>9</sup>Dixon, *Life of Billy Dixon*, 136.



THE PRESENT TEXAS CAPITOL BUILT BY THE CAPITOL COMPANY OF CHICAGO



GENERAL HEADQUARTERS OF THE XII AT CHANNING, TEXAS

To the east of Buffalo Springs, the North Palo Duro loops south from what was then called No Man's Land, into Texas and then swings back to join the Beaver. Berry and Boice located the 777 Ranch along it in 1881.<sup>10</sup> One of the first good herds was that owned by the Snowden Brothers from McMullen County, Texas. They settled on Grapevine, a tributary of the Blue, in Sherman County. Just when they came in is a matter of speculation, but they were ahead of Bates and Beal, running the SNO brand upon cattle graded up by good Shorthorn sires. They sold out to the LX's in 1877.<sup>11</sup> In the northeastern corner of the Panhandle settled the four Bartons, Henry, Clay, Doc, and Dick, to range a fertile scope of country where nearly ten years later Old Ochiltree was to boom to life with expansive ideas and soaring real estate.

To the south of the Canadian in the eastern Panhandle, Nick T. Eaton, from Central Texas, with the U-U, and Tobe Oden with the T-T enjoyed, in the late seventies, the ranges of North Fork and McClellan Creek.<sup>12</sup> Perry LeFors was there with a small herd in 1878, and a great many "little men" exercised the prerogative of squatter sovereignty for their cattle along the valleys of the Washita and the Sweetwater. Among them were Henry Frye, Billie Miller, G. W. Arrington, Cape Willingham, Mark Huselby, Henry Fleming, and others who pushed out the borders of settlement and helped to temper the Mobeetie country with law and order.<sup>13</sup>

The year after he helped Goodnight locate the "Old Home Ranch," Leigh Dyer started the first ranch west of it on the Palo Duro, just above its junction with the Tierra

<sup>10</sup> O. H. Nelson to J. E. H., August 15, 1925.

<sup>11</sup> James East to J. E. H., September 27, 1927.

<sup>12</sup> O. H. Nelson to J. E. H., August 15, 1925.

<sup>13</sup> R. A. LeFors to J. E. H., October 24, 1925; O. H. Nelson, "First Panhandle Stockmen's Association," *The Southwest Plainsman* (Amarillo), February 20, 1926.



Blanca, and north of Canyon City. Here in 1877 he built a log house which stands today, the oldest building in the Panhandle. Here for several years was the extreme western ranch of that country south of the Canadian. Dyer sold it to Gunter, Munson, and Summerfield, and when Summerfield's place was taken by Jot Gunter it changed from the GMS to the  $\nabla$  (T Anchor Ranch), by which name it is known today.<sup>14</sup>

The first man to range cattle to the south of Dyer was L. G. Coleman, who came from southern Colorado in 1878 and located upon the Tule. The next year he went to Hall County, chose a range along Red River, sold a one-fourth interest in his herd to Dyer, and started the Shoe Bar ranch under the firm name of Coleman and Company.<sup>15</sup> Curtis and Atkinson released their  $\diamond$  (Diamond Tail) cattle on Buck Creek in Hall and Collingsworth Counties; Morrison Brothers with the Doll Baby brand located near where Giles is; and Alfred and Vincent Rowe, two Englishmen, ran the RO cattle along the Salt Fork.<sup>16</sup>

Along the base of the Plains south of the Palo Duro the Baker Brothers came from the Ratons in 1877 to be the first cowmen of the Quitaque. Their 2000 head, under the management of J. Warren, were in the  $\neg$  brand. Their ranch was soon bought by Goodnight and Adair, and became apart of the  $\mathfrak{A}$  (JA) holdings, which, with the Tule Ranch to the west, composed the range of one of the greatest pastoral establishments of the West. Colonel McCoy likewise found the Quitaque country to his liking and brought the  $\underline{n}$  (hat) brand.<sup>17</sup> Below the Quitaque Bob Wiley and Tom Coggins brought some eight thousand

<sup>14</sup> C. Goodnight to J. E. H., April 8, 1927; Harry Ingerton, as cited.

<sup>15</sup> O. H. Nelson to J. E. H., February 26, 1927; S. A. Bull to J. E. H., February 27, 1927.

<sup>16</sup> O. H. Nelson to J. E. H., August 15, 1925.

<sup>17</sup> C. Goodnight to J. E. H., September 16, 1927; O. H. Nelson to J. E. H., August 15, 1925.



head of cattle to settle on a fork of the Pease. They came from the Pecos in November of 1878 with their jingle-bob herd—some of John Chisum's cattle which the owners had taken on a mortgage. The next year these cattle were bought by Campbell, and the Matadors launched into the range business in Texas. In the spring of 1879 a man named Hall located not far from Baker, and some eight miles north of Roaring Springs. The same year an outfit of 4000 head with George Brady as foreman located on Tepee Creek.

Early in 1877 before any of these came, Charles P. Tasker, a young Philadelphia spendthrift, was opening the eyes of old Fort Griffin to lavish ways and having Hank Smith select a site for a ranch in Blanco Canyon.<sup>18</sup> Smith located the first ranch on the South Plains, and Tasker gave it the high sounding name of Hacienda Glorieta. But even frontier hospitality became exasperated with the impositions of this scion of the smoky atmosphere who rarely if ever paid an account, and suddenly C. P. Tasker, his negro coachman, and his fine hounds left for parts unknown, and Hank Smith exercised the rights of his mortgage, and came into possession of this glorious estate—a cow camp in Blanco Canyon.<sup>19</sup> John and W. B. Slaughter came to Bull Creek, above Colorado City, in 1878, and moved to Crosby County late in the same year, locating just south of Mount Blanco.<sup>20</sup>

Excellent ranges adjacent to plentiful water were taken first. Back upon the Plains where water was scarce some very good ranges lay idle for several years after the beginning of settlement. Perhaps some settlers clung to the illusion of aridity cherished by Pope and Marcy of pre-settlement days. Even as late as 1880, Joseph G. McCoy,

<sup>18</sup> Dick Bussell to J. E. H., July 19, 1926.

<sup>19</sup> Letters from C. P. Tasker to H. C. Smith, Panhandle-Plains Historical Society.

<sup>20</sup> W. B. Slaughter to J. E. H., October 9, 1926.

the man who opened Abilene, Kansas, as a cattle depot, after a careful examination, declared not more than seven million acres of the Panhandle were an absolute desert. Even as he made his survey Texas solons were about to trade three millions of acres of this land for a capitol, and men born to the saddle were trailing their herds to those rolling swells of grass. Up the Tierra Blanca they went and west along the Tule and the Yellow House. The old trail that the Indian traders and buffalo hunters had used from Fort Sumner to Casas Amarillas lifted its eddies of dust to the saddle gait of a cow horse by 1881, as Doak Good and Ben Webb carried the scanty mail from Colorado City to the old fort.<sup>21</sup> At Portales Spring, beneath a natural porch, they "kept camp" and Doak raised a small bunch of cattle to supplement his none too bounteous wages. Except for stolen cattle gathered there, either by Indians or such outlaws as Billy the Kid and his gang, and a few drift cattle from the Canadian and the Palo Duro, these were the first to graze the Portales sand hills.

As the buffalo became very scarce a party of hunters pushed up the canyon to the Yellow House and pitched camp at a seep spring. The two Causey brothers, George and John, another hunter by the name of Frank Lloyd, with their skinners, after having killed and skinned a paltry 7500 buffalo along the Yellow House and the Running Water in the winter of 1877, built in 1879 a shack of adobe near the spring.<sup>22</sup> They were killing the last of the buffalo. A mere remnant of the once great herds had been driven from its native haunt along the breaks back into the Plains country,<sup>23</sup> and these hunters, holding on after most men had left the range, followed them. Some few remaining

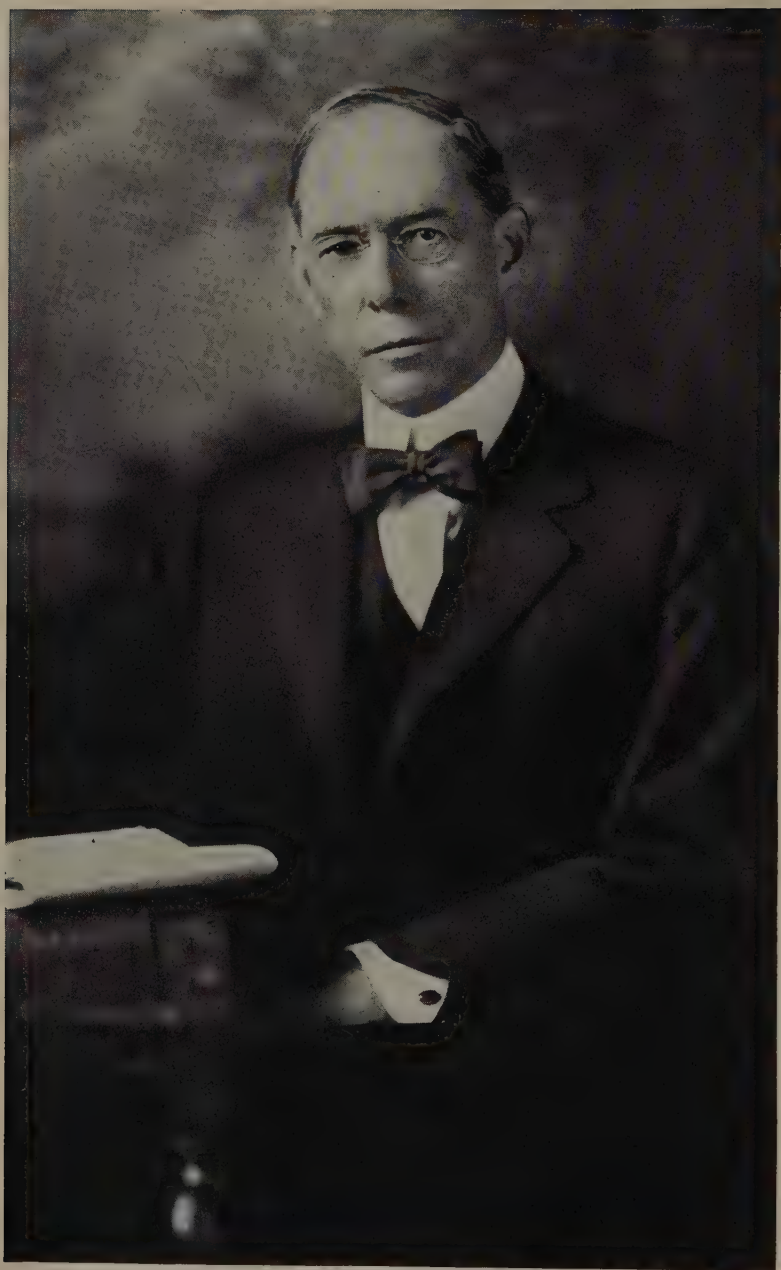
<sup>21</sup> Sid Boykin to J. E. H., June 23, 1927.

<sup>22</sup> Frank Lloyd as cited.

<sup>23</sup> Charles Goodnight to J. E. H., September 3, 1927.



JOHN V. FARWELL, SR., BESIDES BEING A MEMBER OF THE CAPITOL COMPANY,  
BECAME THE FIRST MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THE RANCH



JOHN V. FARWELL, JR., CHAIRMAN, SALES & VALUATION COMMITTEE

hunters killed coyotes, wolves and skunks for their fur—a prosaic ending to an epic hunt. This party stopped long enough to build a little house, of sun-dried brick—but permanent. That action represented an entire movement in Plains life. It depicted the passing of the transient Indian and hunter life; it prophesied the day of settlement. It marked the end of the extreme mobility of the range; it marked the beginning of the era of homes. The ranges of the Sweetwater country were becoming too crowded—as they always became when someone settled within an easy day's ride of the old-timers, who craved some forty miles of "elbow room"—and Jim Newman came to the Yellow House and bought the buffalo camp for sixty dollars. This was in the Capitol Tract and of course he bought no land, but he paid for the house and the intangible "range rights" which belonged to the original settlers by right of priority. Newman turned his herd of 1054 head loose on the Fourth of July, 1882, and held his range until the XIT began fencing. By the spring of 1886 he had moved all of his cattle to the Salt Lake Ranch, about twenty miles east and north of Portales.<sup>24</sup>

The year before the hunters moved to the Yellow House they built a sod house on a tributary of the canyon, which has since been known as Sod House Draw. About the time Newman arrived the Estes boys, Green, Tant, and Sanders, brought their herd to that range and kept bachelors' camp in the little house, moving south about 1885 as fencing preparations went forward. By 1882 a Las Vegas outfit owned by a man named Lynch had located at Spring Lake, which later became the headquarters of the largest division of the XIT.

Some of the first settlers along the Canadian in the XIT

<sup>24</sup>Sid Boykin, as cited.



range held over until the ranch began to stock. In 1882 when A. C. Babcock examined the land so as to check the report made upon the tract by State Commissioner N. L. Norton, he found several outfits running cattle upon the XIT range—Terry's, Simpson's, the LIT, the LE, the LS, and others.<sup>25</sup>

Among the interesting characters of every frontier will be found a few who live by barter. The traders, the early merchants, of the western Panhandle were not exceptions, and two stores which were almost institutions upon and adjacent to XIT lands were once interesting landmarks, but are now forgotten. One of them was run by Old Man George W. Singer. He came in 1879, catering to the buffalo hunters yet upon the range. At the last water in the Yellow House Canyon, two and a half miles northwest of the site of Lubbock, Singer made camp and built a store some eighteen feet square.

He located at the crossing of two military roads, one from Fort Sumner, New Mexico, to Fort Griffin, and the other from Fort Concho to Fort Elliott. A few travelers along these trails contributed to his business. About the same time a Frenchman by the name of DeQuazy built a store a hundred yards from him. Supplies came from Fort Griffin prior to 1882, and later from Colorado City. This humble mercantile house of Singer's was known far and wide as Old Man Singer's Store. When the cowboys pushed up the Canyon with their cattle, he was there. When the roundups drew to a close and jingling spurs struck music from the floor of his store, Old Man Singer was in his glory. Pack horses were hobbled out, bed rolls thrown upon the floor, and when night came the old man left the cowboys in charge and went home. Until far in the morning the

<sup>25</sup> Prospectus, *3,000,000 Acres of Land in the Panhandle of Texas*, 21.

good old game of poker held forth in earnest. When money was gone a cowboy reached up and pulled down a box of stick candy or a plug of tobacco from a shelf, "sweetened the pot," and the game went on. Another went broke, and another, and down came a pair of California pants to be bet against a couple of shirts. Singer appeared in the morning after the struggle was over. Never did a padlock fasten his door, and never was his confidence betrayed to the loss of a cent by these men who gambled in zest but would have shot at a word.<sup>26</sup>

Another frontier store of note was that owned by two Germans, the Sperling Brothers, who came to the western Panhandle by 1880 and settled on Trujillo Creek to start the little settlement by that name, to contend with the Mexican toughs who gave life to the nearby plaza of Salinas, and to sell out their property to Lee and Reynolds, who, late in 1880 or early in 1881, started the LS ranch.<sup>27</sup>

Had the western Panhandle been as well watered as the eastern portion, its settlement would have taken place more rapidly, and many cowmen would have been upon its ranges before the XIT was stocked, in spite of the fact that the Capitol Reservation was rapidly becoming patented land. But the barbed wire fence was drawing its prickly lines across the open range, and the days of free grass and drifting herds were coming to a stormy close. Eastern and foreign capital had been attracted to the cow country, and the Panhandle was getting its share.

In no section of the world has the pastoral pursuit of cattle raising flared to a more magnificent scale than here, when the Prairie and Hansford Cattle companies, the JA's, the Matadors, the Spurs, the American Pastoral Company,

<sup>26</sup>R. C. Burns to J. E. H., September 23, 1927; J. B. Mobley to J. E. H., September 23, 1927; Sid Boykin, as cited.

<sup>27</sup>James H. East to J. E. H., October 8, 1927.

and others were "cornering" staggering amounts of land and counting their cattle by the tens of thousands. It was the day of "book count," of hasty investments and leisurely repentance. And then, as most of the companies were floundering in the net of speculation which they had helped to spread, the Capitol Syndicate, or XIT Ranch, generally recognized as the largest in the United States, began to stock its ranges.



## CHAPTER IV

### *The State Capitol and Its Builders*

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AS the cattle frontier of Texas pushed west and north, as immigrants poured into the state to convert grazing land into fields, as the railroads replaced the freight trails and promoted commerce, the functions of the state government enlarged, and the growing need of adequate state buildings at Austin became apparent. The one expedient of meeting the need of a magnificent state house was through the reservation of state owned lands as a building endowment. At the Constitutional Convention assembled in Austin, J. R. Fleming of Comanche offered a resolution on November 1, 1875, "requesting the Committee on Public Lands and Land Office to consider the propriety of setting apart five million acres of the public domain for the purpose of building a State Capitol."<sup>1</sup>

The imagination thrills to conjecture what might have stood on Capitol Hill had this resolution carried, but five million acres for a state capitol would have been more than Texas needed.

Ten days later W. H. Stewart, of Galveston, offered a similar resolution but pared the amount to 3,000,000 acres. The Committee on State Affairs reported recommending an ordinance "substantially embodying the second resolution," and after one attempt to increase the figure to the

<sup>1</sup>Report of the Capitol Building Commissioners, 3.

first amount, and another to decrease it to 1,000,000 acres, it passed the Convention on November 17, by a vote of 48 to 14. The constitution containing this section was submitted to the people of Texas late in November, and ratified at an election in February of 1876.<sup>2</sup>

This provision opened the way for legislative action, but the mill ground slowly and it was not until February 20, 1879, that a law was passed appropriating 3,050,000 acres, and on April 18 the act to provide for the actual building went through.<sup>3</sup> N. L. Norton of Salado was appointed commissioner to supervise the survey of the Capitol Reservation, which consisted of over 5,000,000 acres lying in Dallam, Hartley, Oldham, Deaf Smith, Parmer, Castro, Lamb, Bailey, Cochran and Hockley Counties, beginning at the northwest corner of the Panhandle and extending south adjacent to the New Mexico line for over two hundred miles.<sup>4</sup> From this reservation of 5,000,000 acres, 3,050,000 were to be selected.

To contract for the survey of these lands, the law provided for a board to be composed of the Governor, O. M. Roberts, the Comptroller, the Treasurer, the Attorney General, and the Commissioner of the General Land Office. Roberts wrote Norton in the summer of 1879, instructing him to bear "in mind the fact that first-class arable land cannot probably be secured in any large amounts and that all land available for pasturage should be secured." Norton was to exercise such discretion as to secure the "best land in the reserve for the State,"<sup>5</sup> and he was to prepare a report indicating therein the character of the soil, topography and water, or "nearest water," of each league surveyed.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 4-9.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 4; *Prospectus, 3,000,000 Acres of Land in the Panhandle of Texas*, 3.

<sup>5</sup>*Report*, as cited, 7.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.



The Board, as provided by law, advertised for bids for surveying the land into league tracts.<sup>7</sup> Twenty were submitted. These ranged from approximately \$6,000 to \$37,500. The lowest bidder failed to provide bond, whereupon the contract was let to the next lowest, J. T. Munson, an able man schooled in law, who had come from Illinois to launch into business at Denison. His bid was \$7,440.<sup>8</sup> Norton and the surveying party set out in the fall of 1879,<sup>9</sup> were forced to abandon their field work because of a drouth, resumed operations the following spring, and the report, with field notes and maps, was in the Land Office early in September of 1880.<sup>10</sup>

Wandering bands of Indians sometimes crossed the Plains at that late day and outlaws maintained strongholds in some few remote spots; therefore the provision made for protection of the surveyors may have been a wise one.<sup>11</sup> In returning to their work in the spring of 1880, the party, of which A. G. Wiley was head surveyor, came by Blanco Canyon. A detail of five Texas Rangers was sent forward with it. By the first of May they were on the Canadian and work was renewed. Good water was not always plentiful and recourse to the alkali lakes was sometimes necessary. Pits were dug at a distance from the lakes and the water that filtered through the sand was hardly so brackish. At one time the surveyor's horses became mixed with a band of mustangs. Had they not been both hobbled and side-lined, they would have been driven off by the mustangs.<sup>12</sup>

Late in January of 1881, Commissioner Norton submitted his report to the Board.<sup>13</sup> The tract was not

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>9</sup>*Prospectus*, as cited, 3.

<sup>10</sup>*Report*, as cited, 8.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>12</sup>*Frontier Times*, August, 1925, 14.

<sup>13</sup>*Report*, as cited.

sectionized, but divided into leagues (Spanish) of 4428 acres.

Fifty thousand acres of the reservation were provided to meet the costs of surveying. By the law of 1879 it was the duty of the Board to sell the lands for cash, or one-fourth cash and the remainder in annual quarterly payments, "in such size tracts as will enable them [the Board] to realize for the whole reservation the best price possible. . . ." None of the land was to be sold for less than fifty cents an acre.<sup>14</sup> Bids upon these fifty thousand acres were received December 10, 1880. The bidders were privileged to specify the boundaries of the land, but the Board reserved the right to reject any bid. The great boom of the cattle industry had not gained sufficient force to create a decided demand for the lands, and only two bids were received. Both were rejected. Again the land was advertised and sold to the only bidder for fifty-five and one-half cents an acre.<sup>15</sup>

Eleven building plans for the capitol were submitted. N. Le Brun, an architect of New York City, was engaged as an expert to recommend the best design, and after a study of the plans he chose that of E. E. Myers of Detroit. His selection was endorsed by the building commissioners, Joseph Lee and N. L. Norton, and approved by the Capitol Board on the seventh of May, 1881.<sup>16</sup>

And then on the ninth of November of the same year the old capitol burned, making imperative the need that had been urgent. The first day of January, 1882, was set for bids for the new building. Mattheas Schnell of Rock Island, Illinois, and A. A. Burck of Rockdale, Texas, were the only

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 5-6.

<sup>15</sup>This land was located in Oldham County and netted \$27,750, one-half of which was placed to the credit of the common school fund, as provided by the law. *Ibid.*, 8-9.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 13-21.

bidders, and the contract was awarded to the first, ten days later, upon the presentation of \$250,000 bond.<sup>17</sup> In return for the building he contracted to erect, he was to receive the 3,000,000 acres of land already set aside.

In accordance with the contract, dirt was broken on the first day of February, 1882,<sup>18</sup> though the first building material was not placed upon the ground until eleven months later.<sup>19</sup> Schnell, with the consent of the State, assigned a three-fourths interest in the contract to Taylor, Babcock and Company, composed of Abner Taylor, A. C. Babcock, John V. Farwell, and Charles B. Farwell. On May 9, 1882, he assigned the remaining one-fourth, and in June this Company re-assigned its interest to Abner Taylor as its representative, "the more effectually and properly to carry out the provisions of the said contract."<sup>20</sup>

This matter of building the Texas state house was no easy undertaking. The Company was forced to build a short railroad to the quarries in Burnet County, and when work began upon the capitol enough American masons were not available. The contractors sent to Scotland for granite experts and then found themselves in the United States court charged with importing labor under contract.<sup>21</sup>

The corner stone was laid on the forty-ninth anniversary of Texas independence, March 2, 1885. This stone of red Texas granite, weighing 16,000 pounds in the rough, had been hauled fifteen miles from the quarries to Burnet by fifteen yoke of oxen, and shipped by rail to Austin. Past and present commingled in the transportation of this stone. Before a large gathering of notables it was slipped into

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 29-31.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>19</sup>*Third Biennial Report of the Capitol Building Commissioners*, 89.

<sup>20</sup>*Report*, as cited, 31 and 181.

<sup>21</sup>Forrest Crissey, "The Vanishing Range," *The Country Gentleman*, March 1, 1913, p. 3.

place, and the symbolic trowel of a mason cut away the excess mortar.<sup>22</sup>

The building was to be delivered to the State, by the original contract, on or before January 1, 1888. But changes in specifications necessitated an extension of the time, and it was not completed until the middle of April.<sup>23</sup>

Original estimates of its cost were placed at about \$1,500,000,<sup>24</sup> but the materials and labor alone totalled \$3,744,630.60.<sup>25</sup> The Syndicate Company did not have to bear all this expense, but its expenditures reached the sum of \$3,224,593.45,<sup>26</sup> for which full title was given to the 3,000,000 acres of land, a certain per cent having been conveyed from time to time as the work progressed.

By contract the State bound itself "to convey . . . the complete and perfect title" to this land.<sup>27</sup> Then when patents to the first leagues were issued, a charge of fifteen dollars each was made. Abner Taylor wrote to the Capitol Board, pointing out the fact that this was a breach of the contract. That body unanimously adopted a resolution which was submitted to Governor Ireland, recommending the refund of these fees and their discontinuance in the future.<sup>28</sup> Somewhere amid the convenient mazes of state administration this resolution must have been lost, for the Company paid over \$10,000 for the title to its land, because the state had not time to check up its loose business items.

The capitol is an imposing structure, second only to the capitol at Washington among the state houses and said to

<sup>22</sup>*Third Biennial Report*, as cited, 88-89.

<sup>23</sup>*Fourth Biennial Report*, 105.

<sup>24</sup>Crissey, "The Vanishing Range," as cited, 3.

<sup>25</sup>*Final Report Capitol Building Commissioners*, 3.

<sup>26</sup>Transcript from office of Capitol Reservation Lands, Chicago.

<sup>27</sup>*Report*, as cited, 5, 101.

<sup>28</sup>*Fourth Biennial Report*, as cited, 9-11.

be seventh among the world's largest buildings. It is five hundred sixty-six and one-half feet long, and over two hundred and eighty-eight feet wide. It is taller than the capitol at Washington, towering three hundred and eleven feet from the grade line to the top of the little lady surmounting the dome.

There was, no doubt, some criticism of the Legislature for the passage of the original law. Soon after letting the contract the Capitol Board offered this defense:

The few criticisms which have occasionally appeared on the policy of this appropriation have generally come from those who originally pronounced the reservation a desert waste, and the effort to utilize it in exchange for a consideration of value as little better than fraud. It is safe to say that these lands have been sold for more than the rate established by law for similar lands. . . . The risk of creating a monopoly . . . in authorizing the sale or exchange of these lands in a body is not greater than that taken by former Legislatures, which have gratuitously bestowed multiplied millions of acres of the same domain on railroad and other corporations. The Capitol lands will represent money actually expended in a business venture. . . . It is, therefore, to the interest of the contractors to sustain and advance the value of these lands by every proper expedient. This can be done more effectually and speedily by a strong syndicate personally interested, than by the . . . State. It is clear that any increase in the value of the Capitol lands . . . will appreciate other Texas realty in a corresponding degree. The building of the Capitol may, then, be regarded as a profitable business engagement for Texas; and the Constitution could have devised no more effective means for the development of the material resources of the State.<sup>29</sup>

With a reasonable discount because of the possible political aspect of their defense, we may credit the Board with some little appreciation of the significance of this, the biggest land swap in Texas history.

On the second call for bids on the survey tract of 50,000 acres, the highest bidder offered fifty-five and one-half cents an acre. This was a better price than the state had been

<sup>29</sup> *Report*, as cited, 50-51.



realizing on its western lands, but in the end the Capitol Syndicate Company paid to Texas more than double this price. Only a few years previously Gunter and Munson were buying certificates issued by the Reconstruction government and were locating in the Panhandle, the land to which the certificates entitled the holders. It is said that they paid only \$16 per certificate and each certificate called for a section of land. According to Charles Goodnight, Munson returned to his Illinois home, raised \$100,000, and then bought up every un-located certificate that was on the market. Assuming that he spent the entire amount, he had in his possession 4,000,000 acres of land. Goodnight, as late as 1883, bought 170,000 for twenty cents an acre. When the contract with the Capitol Syndicate was made almost any land in the Panhandle away from water could have been bought for twenty-five cents, while Gunter and Munson were selling well-watered land along the Canadian for fifty cents an acre, "and glad to get it."<sup>30</sup> The original estimate of the cost of the capitol was a million and a half, but the actual cost made the 3,000,000 acres of land come to practically a dollar and seven cents an acre, about twice as much as the state had been offered in competitive bidding for the best watered and choicest part of the 3,050,000 acres set aside for building the capitol, and four times the price at which unwatered lands were selling. Some citizens unversed in simple calculation prated that Texas had *given* away her birthright, and worried themselves into a ferment over the dangers of a land monopoly.

Meanwhile the Capitol Building Commissioners reported that

The design which has been secured for the Texas Capitol, combining, as it does, all the essential elements of proportion, dignity, size, adapta-

<sup>30</sup> Charles Goodnight to J. E. H., September 3, 1927.

bility, and modern improvement, is believed to be a fair reflex of the enlightenment of our age. As such we respectfully commend it to the people of Texas.<sup>31</sup>

Over forty years later the Texas Legislature passed a resolution addressed to Mr. John V. Farwell, Jr., expressing the gratitude of Texas for the "magnificent and splendid Capitol" which the Company erected.<sup>32</sup>

Development of the ranch was started before the Capitol was complete. The men developing the ranch had helped transform Chicago from an overgrown western town into a metropolis. With but two of these is this story primarily concerned. Among the English families of the seventeenth century to come to America was one by the name of Farwell. They settled down to farming near Painted Post, New York, and became financially independent. Among the children born from the union of Henry Farwell and Nancy Jackson were two sons named Charles B. (1823) and John Villiers (1825).

In July, 1838, the Farwell family left Big Flats, New York, in a covered wagon, and joined the westward migration to Illinois. They passed through Chicago and settled in Ogle County to again follow the plow.<sup>33</sup> In Chicago, May 24, 1900, at a banquet honoring Queen Victoria, John V. Farwell, the guest of honor and the principal speaker, told of that trip:

It was my privilege to see Chicago in July, 1838, from the deck of a prairie schooner. We entered the then incipient city of say 3,000 people, via the Michigan Avenue—Lake Shore Drive, then a succession of sand ridges. . . . Being bent on a farming life, we commenced our westward journey in said prairie schooner and passed over the Chicago

<sup>31</sup> *Report*, as cited, 49-50.

<sup>32</sup> See appendix for this resolution.

<sup>33</sup> John V. Farwell to Samuel H. Roberts, June 28, 1927.

river at Randolph St., on a ferry boat, little thinking that within seven years I should come back to Chicago for a permanent home.<sup>34</sup>

John V. and C. B. Farwell grew to manhood in Illinois on a farm of one hundred and sixty acres. Then they entered Chicago and for years were associated in an immense mercantile business. When in their sixties, they undertook, with business colleagues, the experiment of developing the 3,000,000 acre Capitol Tract upon the frontier of Texas. At the time the contract was assigned to the Capitol Company the Farwells were in the wholesale dry-goods business. Colonel A. C. Babcock, of Canton, and his son-in-law, Colonel Abner Taylor, of Chicago, were the other members of the Taylor Babcock Company.<sup>35</sup> Their first act towards establishing a ranch was to order a careful inspection of the land they were to receive.

<sup>34</sup> *Reminiscences of John V. Farwell* (by his elder daughter), 17-18 (Ralph Fletcher Seymour, Chicago, 1928).

<sup>35</sup> "The Capitol Syndicate or XIT Ranch," 1, Chicago Files.



## CHAPTER V

### *Babcock's Inspection and the Texas-New Mexico Boundary*

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THE Capitol Company assumed the contract to build the state house without so much as inspecting the land it was to receive. The contractors reposed this confidence in Commissioner Norton's report. However, A. C. Babcock was soon on his way to make a thorough inspection of the Capitol Tract.

Through the influence of Charles B. Farwell, Babcock carried a letter from General Sheridan to the commanding officer at Fort Elliott. It secured for him a four-mule ambulance, a wagon, wall tent, and camp equipage. He took the trail for Tascosa, a rollicky little cow-town in Oldham County. There he sought W. S. Mabry, surveyor for the Oldham County Land District, for whom he had a letter of introduction from A. W. Spaight, Commissioner of Insurance and Statistics for Texas. Mabry agreed to help inspect the lands. A two-mule wagon was added to the equipment, some cowboys were hired to help with the work, and a Mexican was engaged to do the cooking.<sup>1</sup>

Learning that Buffalo Springs were near the northwest corner of the Panhandle, the party of ten men, not one of whom had been there, set out for the place. Though Mabry was surveyor of the district that included most of the counties of the western Panhandle, he was late from Alabama and wholly unacquainted with the region. However,

<sup>1</sup>W. S. Mabry, Ms., "Recollections of XIT Ranch," 1-2, Chicago Files.

he had a transcript of the surveyor's field notes of each league of the tract, and once the initial starting point of the reservation surveyor was found, the lines of the leagues could be followed out. The notes upon League Number I described it as beginning at the northwest corner of the State, as established by the John H. Clark Survey of 1859.

The cowboys on their saddle horses, Babcock in his ambulance, the Mexican cook, Felix, driving his mess wagon, and the four-mule wagon with the necessary equipage set out from Tascosa along the road that led to Springer, New Mexico, March 23, 1882. They turned northwest at the Punta de Agua and for some distance made fair progress with their unwieldy outfit. Between Tramperas and Perico creeks the party came into a heavy belt of sand. The bumpy sedge grass and the sand hills made travel extremely difficult.

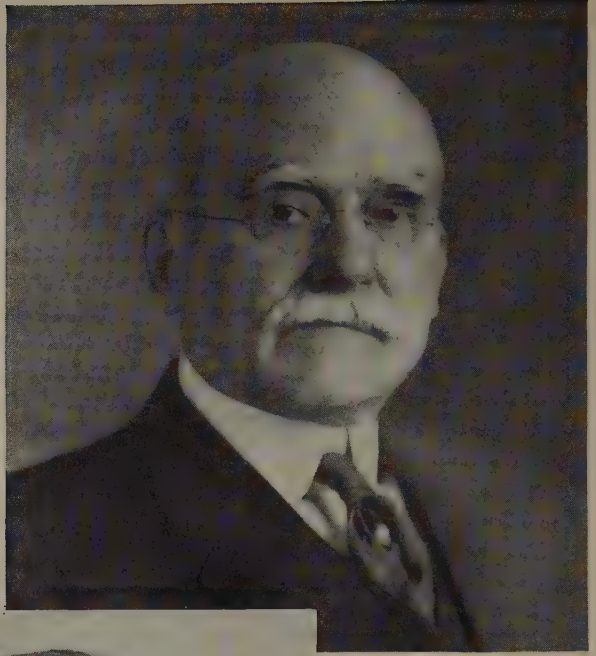
Here Colonel Babcock lost faith in me as a guide [Mabry wrote] and he became very restless and impatient and asked a great many questions as to how far it was to Buffalo Springs, questions we could not answer. After a very tedious and tiresome day pulling through this heavy sand with our unwieldy outfit, we made a dry camp in the sand hills, put up the wall tent for the Colonel and made him as comfortable as possible, but he was so impressed with the idea that we were lost I don't think that he slept any that night. He was a poor sleeper at best. The next morning we lost several hours over our maps. He wanted to be shown on the map what league we were camped on, which could not be done as we had found no corner by which we could locate our position. After much talk Vivian and I left camp horseback to find Buffalo Springs.

About mid-afternoon they reached the place. The Prairie Land and Cattle Company had a camp there in an adobe house, and kept two cowboys to ride the range and look after their cattle that grazed the northern end of the Capitol Tract. Neither cowboy was there, but a quarter of a beef was hanging near, coffee and bread were in the house,





C. B. FARWELL, MEMBER OF THE COMPANY, WAS U. S. SENATOR AT THE  
TIME OF THE TEXAS-NEW MEXICO BOUNDARY SETTLEMENT



GEORGE FINDLAY, FIRST MANAGING TRUSTEE; WALTER FARWELL, FORMER  
MANAGING DIRECTOR

and soon the two had a hot meal. After feeding their horses, they started back to report that the Springs were found.

We knew from our course up [Mabry wrote], that the Colonel's camp must be about due south; so on our return we took a south course. It soon became dark and we needed some guide . . . so I told Vivian to ride south two or three hundred yards and place himself in line with me and the north star, when he did this I selected a star due south of him, knowing it could not move enough in the distance we had to go to throw us much off of the course . . . one could watch the star and the other the lay of the land we had to travel over. As we rode along we wondered whether everyone in camp would be asleep and the camp dark, and that we might pass near . . . and not see it. About ten o'clock much to our delight a light loomed up in the distance. Changing our course but little we rode straight to . . . our camp. Everyone asleep but the Colonel. He had not even considered going to bed. He was so pleased with the news we brought him, that we had found Buffalo Springs and could land him there safely the next day, that he got out a bottle of Chapin & Gore's best and made us a long toddy, which seemed just what we needed. We spent about half an hour in pleasant conversation and went to bed happy.<sup>2</sup>

From the Springs Babcock went in search of the north-west corner of the State, as established by Clark and "adopted by J. T. Munson, the contract surveyor for the capitol lands." Clark had marked the corner, supposedly the intersection of the 103rd meridian with the 36-30 parallel, by digging a circular trench and setting up a large cedar post. Babcock came upon a sandstone post, the corner established by the survey of Richard O. Chaney and William W. Smith, who had sectionized No Man's Land in 1881. Evidently this was not the point established by Clark, and, with further search, his location was found, 413½ varas west and 131 varas south of the sandstone post. Mabry had no way of deciding which was the true location, but he pointed out the significance of the two

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 2-4.

corners to Babcock. They knew that Munson began his survey from the Clark corner, but should the Chaney-Smith corner be established as the true one and the 103rd meridian projected south from it as the western boundary of Texas, then a strip of land more than two miles wide and about three hundred and ten miles long would be cut off and placed in New Mexico.<sup>3</sup>

Munson's lines were easily followed, and Babcock rode in his ambulance with Norton's report spread out before him. An odometer was made by tying a string to the wheel of the ambulance, the circumference of which had been measured. By counting the revolutions of the wheel the party knew where to stop and look for the corner of the next league. A mounted man was sent out a mile or two to either side to return and report the character of the land. In this way, practically the entire tract was inspected and each league compared with the description given in the report Norton had made. Because of a belt of sand hills Norton had rejected about fourteen leagues in Dallam, and a strip of land in Bailey and Lamb counties.<sup>4</sup>

Colonel Babcock was unused to camp life. His wall tent was set up every night with a Sibley stove to warm it and drive away the evening chill of the high plains. Instead of rolling his bed upon the ground as the others did, he slept on a cot. "Before leaving Chicago he bought a large drummer's trunk . . . filled . . . it with a great variety of canned goods, such as boneless chicken, canned beef, canned cheese of various kinds, and a good supply of crackers. . . . At each meal a camp table was set for the Colonel, in his tent." He wanted Mabry and Vivian to eat with him, but they, with a better knowledge of the

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 4-5.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 5-7.

democratic niceties of western camp life, declined the invitation, reminding him that they would eat up his store of delicacies and that they were accustomed "to eating around the camp fire."

C. B. Vivian, a one-armed cowboy who was clerk of Oldham County at the time, "was familiar with camp life . . . had seen a good deal of the world, and was an entertaining useful fellow in camp." The Colonel's table was reinforced with edibles from the camp fires of the boys. Vivian was an expert at broiling a steak, and he carefully laid in a supply of wood to use as the party traveled through, for the most part, a timberless country. Cowchips gathered in sacks as the party passed along furnished fuel for many meals prepared by Felix. But

the Colonel had a very strong dislike for anything cooked with cowchips [Mabry said]. His dislike for this fuel furnished the camp with a good deal of amusement and they soon began to refer to it as Babcock coal. He was a very early riser, was up every morning before daylight with lantern lit, calling the cook and getting the men up to feed the teams, so we could get an early start. This early rising and watching the cook so closely gave him a disgust and dislike for Felix . . . and he got so he would not eat anything . . . Felix cooked. He was not cleanly enough to suit the Colonel. I do not know what he would have done had it not been for Vivian and his trunk of canned goods. In the best regulated establishments it is not best to watch the cook too closely. We have to take our food largely on faith. The balance of us thought Felix was a good cook. His sour dough rolls cooked in a Dutch oven were excellent. They would rise until they would almost lift the lid off the oven, [were] thoroughly done and brown and had a very appetizing odor.

Colonel Babcock reached the point where he would eat nothing that the Mexican prepared. But after a month his appetite improved, and one day on the South Plains, he called Mabry into the tent and said in a low voice:

"Go out there and get me two or three of those rolls and



bring them in here, but don't you let that Mexican cook know you are getting them for me." The incident furnished the boys no little amusement and proves that active camp life is hardly conducive to fastidiousness.<sup>5</sup>

The inspection came to an end at the Yellow House in Hockley County, April 27, 1882, thirty-six days after the party left Tascosa. It had traveled over 950 miles to inspect all the land except that in Castro County and to find that Norton's report "as to soil, grass, water, timber, rock and shelter" was correct.<sup>6</sup>

The party met the two Causey brothers, who were in their camp at the Yellow House, and the only buffalo seen on the trip were two calves that these hunters had captured and placed in their corral. Babcock continued south to Colorado City, there to take the train for Chicago. The others drove back to enjoy the urban advantages of Tascosa and quench the accumulated thirsts of a month.<sup>7</sup>

Aside from verifying Norton's report, Babcock discovered the discrepancies in the surveys of the western boundary of Texas. In 1850, Texas, then a State, relinquished her claims to land in eastern New Mexico, western Kansas, and southern Colorado for the consideration of \$10,000,000. She accepted the 103rd meridian and the parallel of 36°30' as the western and northern boundaries of the Panhandle.<sup>8</sup> Therefore the northwest corner of Texas was formed by the intersection of these lines. This intersection was first established by Colonel Joseph E. Johnston in 1857, but the boundary was not surveyed.

In July of 1858 John H. Clark was appointed as a federal

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 6-7.

<sup>6</sup>*Prospectus*, as cited, 21.

<sup>7</sup>Mabry, "Recollections," as cited, 7.

<sup>8</sup>Report No. 1186, 59th Congress, 1st Session, pp. 1-2; *House Reports*, Vol. I, February 13, 1906. Henry Gannett, *Boundaries of the United States* (third edition); Bulletin No. 226, Series F. Geography, 37, Washington 1904.



A. G. BOYCE, JOHN V. FARWELL AND UNCLE HENRY STEPHENS AT THE RANCH HEADQUARTERS



SIX THOUSAND XIT STEERS IN ONE HERD ON THE RITO BLANCO, READY FOR THE FINISHING RANGES OF MONTANA

commissioner and surveyor to aid in establishing this boundary. William B. Scurry was appointed to represent Texas and assist Clark. Clark worked east from the vicinity of El Paso, marking the 32nd parallel to its intersection with the 103rd meridian. He turned north and surveyed the 103rd for about twenty miles. Upon running short of water he gave up the work from that end of the line in May. About that time sectionalism seems to have penetrated to that isolated portion of the wilderness and caused trouble before the Civil War broke. Partisanship found zealous champions in Anson Mills, Scurry's principal assistant, and John E. Weyss, topographer of the Clark party, and such a serious quarrel took place that the Texans withdrew and refused to take part in the further marking of the boundary.<sup>9</sup> Clark then went up the Pecos, crossed to Rabbit Ear Creek, and in September of 1859, located the northwest corner of the state. He ran a line one hundred and fifty-six miles south, when, it is said, his water gave out again and the Indians became so troublesome that he withdrew.<sup>10</sup> This left a gap of about one hundred and thirty miles between the ends of his two lines. He made his report, which, on account of the impending war, was not adopted and then the boundary question was lost sight of. Again in 1874 John J. Major and in 1881 Richard O. Chaney made a location for the northwest corner of the state, but no two of these four different locations agreed.<sup>11</sup>

In 1882, after Babcock saw not only possibilities but probabilities of litigation over these various locations, he had Mabry write letters to Governor O. M. Roberts of Texas and Senator C. B. Farwell "explaining in detail the

<sup>9</sup> Bulletin, United States Geological Survey, No. 194, Series F., Geography 30, Washington, 1902, pp. 14-21.

<sup>10</sup> John V. Farwell to Col. R. D. Bowen, July 7, 1926.

<sup>11</sup> Mabry, "Recollections," as cited, 1-2.



confusion as to the proper location'' of this corner,<sup>12</sup> but no decisive action was taken until nearly ten years later.

Clark's survey of the 103rd meridian was approved by Congress through an act passed March 4, 1891. Senator C. B. Farwell and Colonel Abner Taylor, both in Congress at that time, took an active part in passing the bill. The Chaney corner, about two and one-fourth miles east of Clark's, had not been established in 1880 when Munson surveyed the Capitol lands. But for this Munson might have started his survey from that point, in which case Farwell and Taylor would have had no interest in the Clark survey, nor in saving this land to the State of Texas, and the strip from 36°30' to the 32nd parallel might have gone to New Mexico.<sup>13</sup>

But the boundary question was not settled. It developed, from later surveys, that Clark's line as approved by Congress in 1891 was not the 103rd meridian, but lay about one-half mile west of it. In selling her lands and in deeding the Capitol Reservation to the Farwells, Texas naturally made her assignments by the Munson survey, which started from Clark's initial corner. When the Capitol Company was selling portions of the XIT Ranch prior to 1910, there had seemed to the sellers, who received the land direct from the state, and to the buyers, no flaw in the title, no question of equity.

Besides the failure of Clark to run his line along the meridian, there was a discrepancy in his two lines. The one he ran from the north and the line he ran from the south, neither of which was completed, did not coincide and would not have met had they been projected. The Syndicate sent James D. Hamlin to Washington in the

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.



interest of the equitable settlement of the boundary question in 1907, and he attended every session of Congress until 1911, when the matter was finally settled. Shortly before New Mexico sought admission as a state, Congressman Stephens from Texas introduced a bill having for its purpose the connecting of the two ends of Clark's surveys by a diagonal. It failed to pass.

The New Mexico Constitutional Convention of 1910 contended that the eastern boundary of the state was not upon the true 103rd meridian, but west of it "a little over to considerably less than 3 miles," and that the land between the two lines "of right" belonged to New Mexico.<sup>14</sup>

Then in 1910 William H. Andrews, as territorial delegate in Congress from New Mexico, engineered the introduction of an "enabling act" for the purpose of enabling his territory to become a state. On June 20, 1910, the Enabling Act was approved, but the constitution had not been submitted to the President. Among its provisions was a statement of the boundaries. Andrews knew that the boundary, as already established, was not the 103rd meridian, but this bill so designated the eastern boundary of New Mexico. It looked as though this strip of land would be taken from the Texas owners, placed in New Mexico, and, as generally understood, left vacant and open to filing. The Capitol Company took action that saved for Texas this strip, one-half mile wide and more, and three hundred and ten miles long, and thereby saved its owners much litigation. John V. Farwell, in a letter to Col. R. D. Bowen, gives an account of how the question was finally settled:

When we discovered what this would mean to the State of Texas and to ourselves, we communicated with Senator Bailey, Senator Culberson

<sup>14</sup>*House Report* No. 1883, 61st Congress, 3rd session, p. 4.

and Congressman Stephens, and also wrote to Speaker of the House Joseph G. Cannon. While Congressman Stephens was much interested, we got no satisfactory response from any of the other gentlemen. I, therefore, had our attorneys, Tenney, Harding & Sherman, make up a brief of our case, which I took to Washington, and showed to President Taft. . . . I had known Mr. Taft very well during our undergraduate days at Yale, and had kept up my friendship with him ever since.

I met him . . . at the White House, and told him I knew he was always interested in preventing unnecessary litigation, and that I had a case in which I thought he could be of great service along that line, if I were right in my contention. I then told him the . . . facts, and gave him the documents covering them. I said to him that we only wanted what was right, and if he thought we were not right in our contention we would make no further protest to the proposed legislation. . . .

He said he would be glad to read over the documents, and let me know his position later on. . . .

He telephoned me the next morning, saying he would like to have me meet himself, two senators from Texas, Representative Andrews and Congressman Stephens, at the Cabinet Room of the White House, at about eleven o'clock. . . . When I got there, these gentlemen were all present, and President Taft stated the case as I had represented it to him, and said as a judge he had decided many such cases, and he had gone over the question very, very carefully, and had come to the conclusion that our Company was right—that it was an outrage for New Mexico to attempt to get this land away from Texas, and, as far as he knew, nobody had made any particular effort to prevent it, up to date. Representative Andrews then said he would do anything the President wanted. President Taft inferred that he had not done very much as yet to show a right disposition towards the question. Stephens explained his Bill and his position.

The President then said he was going to direct Attorney-General Wickersham to draw up a special message to Congress, which would provide that, when this Enabling Act was passed, the eastern boundary of New Mexico should be on the original line of the survey made by Clark, except in that portion where the two lines did not meet, and that a joint commission of the United States and Texas should decide where the diagonal connecting these lines should be.<sup>15</sup>

The message was sent and the bill passed with these provisions. President Taft wrote Mr. Farwell upon its passage:

<sup>15</sup> John V. Farwell to Col. R. D. Bowen, July 7, 1926.

The White House  
Washington.

February 18, 1911.

My dear John:

I have yours of February 16th. I am glad the Texas-New Mexico boundary business went through. I signed it with pleasure.

We shall have an extra session unless the reciprocity measure goes to a vote this session.

Sincerely yours,  
Wm. H. Taft.

John V. Farwell, Esquire,  
Chicago, Illinois.

The joint resolution in regard to the boundary was approved on February 16, 1911. It declared that the United States and Texas had patented land along the line of the John H. Clark survey, and any provision of the constitution of New Mexico that "in any way tends to annul or change the boundary lines between the State of Texas and Territory or State of New Mexico shall be of no force or effect."<sup>16</sup> Thus the Capitol Syndicate was largely instrumental in the settlement of the boundary controversy.

It was not a disinterested matter for the Capitol Company and other land owners, but it was a question of considerable importance to Texas and should have commanded the active interest of her senators and congressmen.

<sup>16</sup> "Report upon the Resurvey and Location of the Boundary Lines between the States of Texas and New Mexico," pp. 1-2 (Texas Land Office, 1911).



## CHAPTER VI

### *The First Cattle*

THE Capitol Reservation or the range of the XIT Ranch was over two hundred miles in length, a waving sea of nutritious grasses. On the Plains proper grama and mesquite grass made an unbroken turf, furnishing excellent range for the wild animals of the Plains—buffaloes, antelopes, and mustangs—and the scarcely less wild Texas cows that replaced them. In the undulating sand country there was bunch grass and the sedge grew tall and rusty, furnishing shelter for prairie chickens and tinder for fires. The buffalo grass, closely resembling the curly-top mesquite and seemingly a related species, has been claimed as the best grass.<sup>1</sup> By tests conducted at Manhattan, Kansas, it proved “considerably superior to Kentucky blue grass and very much better than timothy.” These grasses cured in the summer and fall, and cattle wintered well with no other feed. Babcock inspected these grass lands and was favorably impressed.<sup>2</sup>

Our lands examined by me [he reported] are generally well adapted to agriculture. There is no question but they will produce fine crops of all kinds of grain adapted to that climate. I found our lands and the climate admirably adapted for grazing purposes, the prevailing grass being mesquite, which is exceedingly nutritious, said to be not excelled in fat producing qualities. Stock in that climate require no other feed winter or summer.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Land Booklet*, 15; *The Tascosa Pioneer*, June 12, 1886; Marcy, *Exploration of Red River*, 40.

<sup>2</sup> *Land Booklet*, 14.

<sup>3</sup> *Prospectus*, as cited, 21-22.

Babcock was told, and correctly, that yearling steers brought from Southwest Texas to the Panhandle would in a year weight from one to two hundred pounds more than if kept in the lower country. He was told that both cattle and sheep were "very profitable," and that the JA's had realized a ninety-eight per cent calf crop in 1881. He was told that ranches of the Panhandle paid twenty-five to forty per cent annually "and generally with very slack management"; and that, on account of state laws and the system and organizations of the cowmen, the business was "as legitimate and secure from loss on account of drifting, straying, theft or other causes, as the raising of cattle or sheep in Illinois." In this evident exaggeration is seen something of the zeal of present day boosters.<sup>4</sup>

But the boom was on and it was natural that Babcock should hear tales of prosperity. He did not recognize that even in the cattle business depression dogged the footsteps of unnatural expansion. The wildly speculative early eighties presaged the débâcle of the late eighties.

Thrilled by ideas of the "cattle bonanza," Babcock returned to show "on paper" what the profits of the range would be from grazing 150,000 head of cattle. He estimated the purchase price at twenty dollars a head and an annual increase of ninety per cent, whereby in five years the purchase amount of \$3,000,000 would net \$4,561,031, or an increase of a little over thirty per cent annually. And Babcock gave this as a "conservative estimate."<sup>5</sup> Reports such as this were at the time commanding the attention of the speculators of eastern North America and were attracting many investors, among them the canny financiers of Edinburgh. The investments made, the investor had

<sup>4</sup>*Prospectus*, as cited, 21-22.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 23.



time to consider the rarity of ninety per cent calf crops on million-acre ranges, the hazards of drouth and blizzard, and the possibility of disastrous decline in market value.

I would advise placing cattle and sheep on our lands [Babcock reported]—cattle on northern and sheep on southern portion. I would suggest fencing our lands in ranches. The cost of wire fence, when enclosing large tracts, I ascertained to be less than ten cents per acre.

He pointed out that fencing would save the expense of many line camps and obviate the annoyance of drifts from other herds.<sup>6</sup>

The Capitol Company had at first intended to colonize its land. But finding such action impossible at that early period in Panhandle development, it followed Babcock's advice and established the ranch as a temporary institution to secure the use of the land until the time of the farmer should come.<sup>7</sup>

To fence three millions of acres, to provide watering facilities for cattle where little live water existed, to build houses and barns and to buy thousands and thousands of cattle required much money. To begin such an immense enterprise when the cattle business was going into the decline of the middle eighties and money was becoming scarce called for no small amount of courage. American banks refused to lend on anything not quoted upon the stock exchange, and, finding the raising of sufficient capital in the United States impossible, John V. Farwell went to England. As large buyers of merchandise the Farwells maintained offices in Paris, Manchester, and Belfast, and were known therefore to capitalists in those cities.

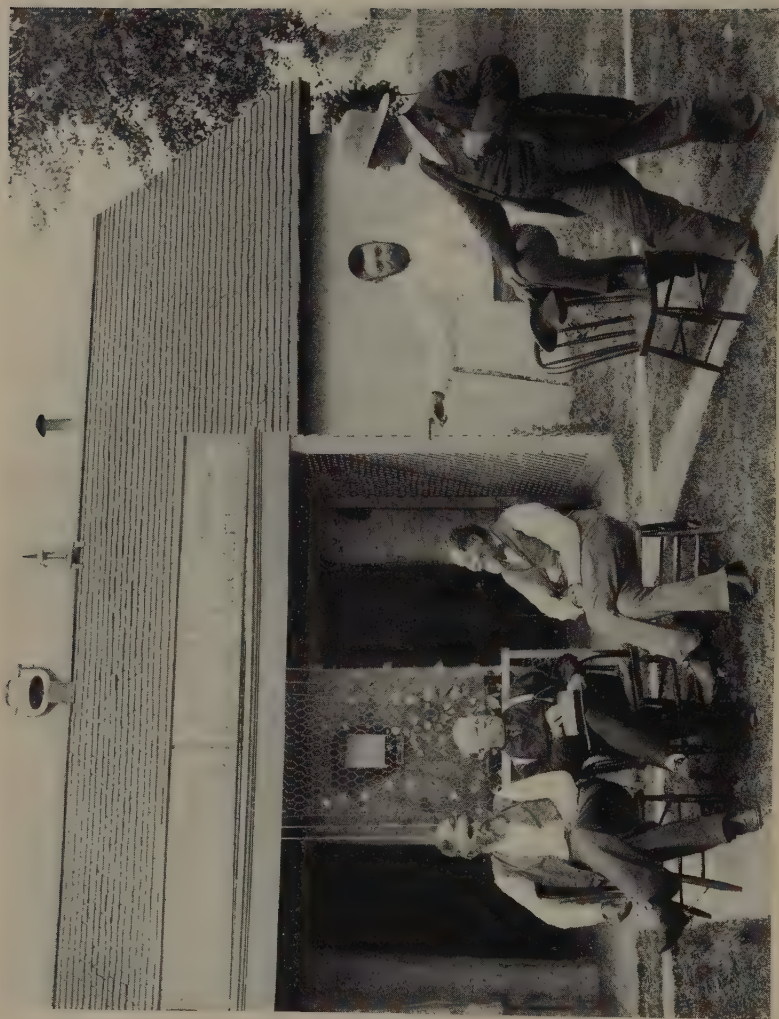
In order to borrow money in England Mr. Farwell found that he must form an English company. In 1885 the Capitol

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 21-22.

<sup>7</sup>Crissey, "The Vanishing Range," as cited, 4.



TEXAS RANGERS WOOD SAUNDERS AND WALTER DURBIN AT REALITOS  
(DUVAL CO., TEXAS), SHORTLY BEFORE IRA ATEN BROUGHT SAUNDERS  
TO THE RANCH TO FIGHT THIEVES



THREE POSITIVE FORCES FOR LAW IN THE TEXAS PANHANDLE, CHARLES GOODNIGHT, HENRY STEPHENS AND A. G. BOYCE. JOHN V. FARWELL STANDS AT THE EXTREME RIGHT

Freehold Land and Investment Company, Limited, was organized,<sup>8</sup> and incorporated under "The Companies Acts" of England. Its authorized capital was 3,000,000 pounds (\$15,000,000) two-thirds of which had been subscribed by October of 1888.<sup>9</sup>

Acquisition and development of the Capitol lands as a cattle ranch was the expressed purpose of the new organization.<sup>10</sup> As the Capitol Company, the American organization, received its land from the state it transferred it to the trustees of the Capitol Freehold Land and Investment Company, whose offices were in London. The latter organization borrowed money through the sale of debentures, which bore interest not to exceed seven per cent. The first debenture issue reached 1,000,000 pounds sterling, and was made in certificates of fifty pounds and above, bearing interest at five per cent. Each debenture was transferable and might be cashed anywhere in Great Britain. Interest coupons were payable semi-annually while the debentures matured in periods of five, seven and ten years, but might be recalled and redeemed by the Company upon six months' notice by the payment of a bonus of two and one-half per cent for each year of the unexpired term.<sup>11</sup>

The directors of the Company were men of distinction, chosen not without regard for business psychology. The Earl of Aberdeen and Quintin Hogg were the first trustees for the debenture holders. The Marquis of Tweeddale, Governor of the Commercial Bank of Scotland, was chairman of the board of directors. The four other foreign directors were Honorable Lord Thurlow, Edward M.

<sup>8</sup> Walter Farwell to J. E. H., September 22, 1927.

<sup>9</sup> *Debenture Prospectus*, 1888, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-9.



Denny, a London merchant, Sir William Ewart of Belfast, and Henry Seton-Karr, a member of Parliament. In America John V. Farwell, Charles B. Farwell, Walter Potter, a Boston banker, and Abner Taylor completed the board.<sup>12</sup> The National Provincial Bank of England, London, the Commercial Bank of Scotland, Edinburgh, and the Importers and Traders National Bank, New York, were the company bankers.<sup>13</sup>

The ranch was turned over to John V. Farwell as managing director, and the Capitol Freehold Land and Investment Company had almost nothing to do with its operation. Annual reports giving the conditions of the ranch, number of cattle, sales, and values were made to the directors by Mr. Farwell. The debentures constituted "a first charge on the freehold land and improvements, cattle, equipment, and all other property of the Company. In offering these bonds for sale the directors felt that they formed "an exceptionally well-secured and desirable investment."'<sup>14</sup>

The XIT ranch was often thought of as an English institution because of the English capital used in its development. It was owned and managed by Americans. The organization in London constituted the necessary technical machinery for securing needed loans, raised through the sale of interest-bearing bonds, secured by a mortgage upon the lands under development. Foreign buyers of bonds were not shareholders in the ranch, only in the Company, as they received interest upon their money whether the ranch was paying dividends or not. When the Farwells in 1909 completed the redemption of the bonds, the foreign Company went out of existence. Then the Capitol Reserva-

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 9.



tion Lands, a real estate trust, was formed for the disposal of unsold land.

Annual meetings of the directors were held in London until that time. The reports and results kept the foreign bond-holders satisfied with their security, and the formality met the English legal technicalities governing such companies.<sup>15</sup>

Comparison of the Syndicate's dealings with the English directors and the dealings of no few other companies of like nature is interesting. The stories of "book counts," by which foreign investors paid for thousands of cattle that were not upon the range, of "padded" tally lists, of failure to report losses, and of misrepresentations of range and market conditions yet find currency in regions where foreign syndicates briefly flourished. But, in making his first report in November, 1886, Mr. Farwell deducted the losses from the total of the herd, "something," he observed, "cattle companies have not usually done on their first year's business. In most companies the losses are carried along unreported as long as it is possible to do so. We, however, took great pains to ascertain our loss and report it to you, and have done so as far as it was possible, as we wished to face our losses from the beginning." Furthermore a low evaluation of the cattle had been made, one "much lower than is usual in similar cases, although they are at least equal in value to any in the vicinity. My object in so doing has been to avoid any possible over estimate of the value of the herd, and my anxiety in this matter has been thus great, as I well know the total results of overvaluation in other companies, and my present valuation is thus undoubtedly low."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, *Abstract of Capitol Lands*, 24.

<sup>16</sup>John V. Farwell, *Report of the Managing Director*, 1886, p. 8.

That portion of the ranch extending north from Deaf Smith County, some 1,500,000 acres, is more rolling than the southern half and a better cattle country.<sup>17</sup> The Canadian River cut the ranch about midway between the north and south ends. To the north the topography changes from rolling to gently rolling, then to high rolling and to gently undulating, or plains country. South of the river rolling land gives way to gently rolling to meet the cap-rock in Deaf Smith and Oldham Counties, which marks the northern boundary of the Llano Estacado. From this irregular line of bluffs, plains land lies swell upon swell to the Yellow House and the south-line fence. The altitude of two thousand feet in the south gradually rises to four thousand, seven hundred feet at Buffalo Springs.<sup>18</sup> Except for scattering cottonwoods along the Canadian and its tributaries, and scrub hackberry, mesquite and cedar scattered throughout the breaks, the region was barren of timber.<sup>19</sup>

After deciding to stock its lands, the Company located its headquarters at Buffalo Springs. The north end was the first to be stocked. George Findlay, after ten years with the Farwell interests in Chicago, began the stupendous task of directing the business details of the ranch from that office. The Texas ranch became his life work. Colonel B. H. Campbell, usually called "Barbecue" because of his brand BQ, was brought from Wichita, Kansas, and made general manager of the ranch. As a cowman in Indian Territory he became noted for his parsimony, traditionally antagonistic to the code of the cow camp. But inversely proportionate to his penuriousness on his own ranch was his extravagance on the XIT.<sup>20</sup> Berry Nations, who had come up the trail

<sup>17</sup>*Prospectus*, 3.

<sup>18</sup>*Land Booklet*, 7-8.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>20</sup>A. L. Matlock to J. E. H., December 1, 1927.



ESCARBADA HEADQUARTERS WHERE WINDOWS PAINTED A DARK GREEN OFFERED NOCTURNAL PROTECTION FROM CATTLE  
RUSTLERS' BULLETS



WHEN THE BRANDING STARTED THE FRIGHTENED CALVES PUSHED AND RAN TO THE FAR CORNER OF THE CORRAL IN AN ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE THE ROPER AND HIS LARIAT, WITH WHICH HE SO QUICKLY ENCIRCLED THEIR HEELS OR NECK TO DRAG THEM TO THE BRANDING FIRE



from South Texas with a herd of George West's cattle, became range foreman, though a man named Collins was the boss at first. Over on the Punta de Agua the general round-up, with fifteen to twenty wagons, gathered for the "spring work." Ruck Tanner, wagon boss for the XIT, was running the ranch outfit of more than twenty men there.<sup>21</sup>

When Campbell was away on business W. S. Mabry took control. After his services were required to survey the fence lines in Hockley and Cochran Counties, Walter de S. Maud, fresh from England and a jolly good fellow, took his place. He represented the English investors in the Capitol Freehold Land and Investment Company. He was unversed in the ways of the range but not at all overburdened by responsibilities. Between drinking high balls at the ranch and gambling in Tascosa, his time was well taken. Shooting craps was just coming into form at the little frontier town, and Maud followed the game with zest.<sup>22</sup> This group of men directed the initial organization of the XIT Ranch.

Campbell contracted for cattle in southern and western Texas, and the first herd, driven by Ab Blocker, came north from the Fort Concho country, reaching the ranch in July, 1885. From the drivers of each herd Collins, the range boss, hired all who wished to stay, and Campbell bought the wagons and camp equipment of every outfit that would sell. Mac Huffman, one of the cowboys coming up the trail from South Texas, said he never saw so many bull's-eye lanterns in his life as they had on hand at Buffalo Springs.<sup>23</sup>

Thousands of cattle were contracted for delivery in July and August. Some herds were late, and "Barbecue"—"big

<sup>21</sup>Frank Irwin to J. E. H., September 24, 1927; M. Huffman to J. E. H., November 3, 1927.

<sup>22</sup>H. F. Mitchell to J. E. H., June 10, 1927; E. C. G. Austen to J. E. H., November 7, 1927.

<sup>23</sup>M. Huffman, as cited.



faced, overbearing and loud mouthed—gave the owners a pretty hard cussing.” A big corral and a large chute capable of holding twenty-four head of grown cattle had been built. In considering what brand to put on the Company cattle, Campbell had settled on a brand representing a frying pan. But when Ab Blocker, bubbling over with knowledge of the range and trail suggested the XIT, Campbell accepted it.<sup>24</sup> At once the ranch became known as the XIT wherever stray beef was eaten or mavericks were branded.

Wherever men rode the ranges of the cow country they talked of cattle and of horses, and they talked too of the heraldic marks of ownership, the brands these cattle and horses wore. Perhaps from the fertile mind of some “sweater” or chuck-line rider, whose daily bread depended more upon his ability to lie engagingly than his inclination to work, the legendary significance of the XIT brand emerged into Plains folk-lore. Almost any embryo cowboy who has perched upon the top rail of a corral knows that XIT means “Ten (counties) in Texas” and that the brand was chosen because XIT “waddies” rode into and over that many counties without leaving the home range. Commission men of the stockyards of Chicago, between measured expectorations of the juice of the weed, told the story when XIT steers came in by the trainload from Montana<sup>25</sup> and the story is still being told wherever reckless riding and good cow work mark the Texas cowboy.

Ab Blocker knew that a good brand must be easy to make but difficult to burn or alter, and it is doubtful if his mind dwelt upon any county in Texas, much less the ten that embraced this ranch. The XIT brand, though a large

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, Marvin Hunter, *The Trail Drivers of Texas*, I, 432.

<sup>25</sup>L. Gough, Ms., “History of the XIT Ranch.”

one, was easily made with one five-inch bar and was difficult to burn out.

Campbell asked Blocker to take charge of the branding but the trail driver wished to set out for Camp Supply, where John Blocker's north-bound herds were blockaded along with many others. When Campbell asked him what method he would follow in branding the incoming herds, Blocker, with theatrical bent, said he would show him. He called "Goat," his negro cook, to get a horse and follow him. "Goat," who was no mean cowhand, left his dough and came with his rope. After the Mexicans had built a fire Blocker called for the boys to turn a cow out at the gate. He took after her, swung a regular "Blocker loop," picked up her front feet, and the cow horse did the rest. Hardly had the cow hit the ground than the cowboys were upon her, an iron was brought, and she was branded. "Goat" roped the next cow, Blocker followed, and so on until they had roped about twenty, "never missing a throw."

Then Blocker rode up to the manager and, "just putting on," said:

"Colonel Campbell, that is the way we brand in Tom Green County—the way John Blocker has taught us."

"Barbecue" looked at him and roared: "Well, Mr. Blocker, you surely are mighty good, but you can't brand any cattle for me."<sup>26</sup>

Blocker didn't want the job. He gathered his remaining riders and headed his wagon and remuda east toward Supply, with "Goat" again among his pots and skillets and sour-dough.

Branding began when the first chute-full of cattle was

<sup>26</sup> M. Huffman, as cited. Mr. Huffman went to the ranch with Blocker's herd, began work under George Collins, and stayed with the Company as a division foreman for many years.

jambled in and the bars put up behind. Four or five men did nothing but handle branding irons. Following each was a man with a pole about five feet long. He thrust one end of this under a bar of the chute on the opposite side, and with the lever thus formed drew down across the cow's neck to keep her from jumping about when the hot iron was applied. This gave dispatch to the branding and saved time. When all the cattle in the chute were branded, the bars in front were drawn, and the cattle passed out into the pasture, and the chute was filled again with cattle from the corral. An old mule skinner with sixteen mules "strung out," hauled cottonwood and piñon from the head draws of the Corrumpa, in No Man's Land, forty miles away. He plied his axe and his bull whip day after day to keep the Mexicans who tended the fire supplied with wood. When the iron a man was using became cold and would not sear the hide, the brander yelled, "hot iron," and a Mexican brought one from the fire at a trot and returned with the cold one. "Coosie"<sup>27</sup> had breakfast for the boys before day, and branding began by daylight. After a short respite for dinner the work continued until dark. Daily the chute poured forth its bovine flood, while the corrals behind it received a stream of cattle from the south.

Cattle to be branded were driven from a large corral into a small one, the "crowding pen." Yelling, sweating, and plying quirts, the cowboys drove the cows into the chute until they jambled it full. Amid dust from thousands of hoofs and through acrid smoke from burning hair and hide, the branders walked alongside the chute upon ground packed like hardened cement until their feet were raw. The hills about Buffalo Springs for miles around looked like one immense "day herd." After the work

<sup>27</sup>A corruption of the Spanish word *cocinero*, meaning cook.

commenced, 22,000 head were run through the chute before the branding ended.<sup>28</sup>

During the spring and summer of 1885 contracts were made for 65,000 cattle. While in England Mr. Farwell let contracts for 40,000 of these to agents of American cattlemen. For various reasons the contractors failed to deliver about 45,000 head, fortunately for the Company. Adequate preparations for handling this many cattle had not been made in 1885, and when cattle went down in price by 1886, the Company saved money by letting new contracts.<sup>29</sup>

While most of the XIT cowboys were busy receiving cattle at Buffalo Springs, Ruck Tanner had an outfit with the general roundup, "working"<sup>30</sup> the surrounding country. About that time Frank Irwin quit punching cattle in Indian Territory and set out for Arizona. He rode up to the Buffalo Springs ranch and met his old friend, Berry Nations.

Nations told me he wanted a man about my size, to go to the Canadian the next day [Irwin said]. I told him he would have to go a long way to find one, as I was going to Arizona to get rid of the chills and fever that had been bothering me down in the Territory. He lied to me, saying I couldn't get through, as there was no water. He sent out some men to bring in the horses. He cut out twenty-one head of small Texas horses for me. They all had the itch, and had very little hair upon them.

The next day I told him I would go to work. He told me where I would meet Ruck Tanner, who was over on the Punta de Agua waiting for the general roundup to start. I went over and laid up about a week with the XIT outfit. There were fourteen wagons<sup>31</sup> when I got there. We waited for others to come in. Cattlemen from southern Colorado, from northern New Mexico, the Strip, and from Texas met there for the general roundup. Some outfits sent men but no wagon. The OX, ZH, Cross S, TWT, Seven Up and Down, 7HL, 101, Pitchfork, and the LIT

<sup>28</sup> M. Huffman, as cited.

<sup>29</sup> John V. Farwell, *Report of the Managing Director*, 1886, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> "Work" is the inclusive term applied to handling cattle. To round up stock, to brand calves, and to gather beeves is "to work" cattle.

<sup>31</sup> Chuck wagons, representing at least that many ranches.

outfits were represented. That year the XIT sent wagons out to work through the surrounding ranges. Later they just sent "outside men," as they had the best fence in the world, and not many cattle got through. The Colorado and New Mexico men got a good many of their cattle out of the XIT that year, as they had drifted in and had then been fenced up.<sup>32</sup>

Early in August of 1885 the last of 22,000 cattle received at Buffalo Springs had gone through the chute. An outfit, consisting of about six cowboys and chuck wagon, began drifting the cattle away from Buffalo Springs to different waterings. Cowboys "loose herded" the cattle for several days "to locate" them, turned them loose, and went back to Buffalo Springs after another herd.

Fall came and the grass matured and dried. A fire broke out in the Arkansas River country, swept south and jumped the Cimarron near the 101 Ranch. In spite of the efforts of the cowboys to check it, it burned the Buffalo Springs country clean, destroyed most of the grass in the Middle Water and Rito Blanco ranges, and burned itself out in the Canadian breaks. Collins pushed four thousand cattle across the line into New Mexico to drift far and wide before the severe blizzards of the winter that followed. The bulk of the cattle were thrown south to the unburned country along the Canadian.<sup>33</sup> By the next summer losses had depleted the herd to 16,813.<sup>34</sup>

During 1885 all cattle received went north of the Canadian. In 1886 sixteen thousand head of "grown stuff" were branded at Rito Blanco, and many were placed in the Alamocitos, Alamoso, and Trujillo country just south of the river. By November, 1886, a total of 110,721 cattle had been bought and contracted. The value of the cattle, horses, and mules was placed at \$1,322,587, and that of the

<sup>32</sup> Frank C. Irwin, as cited.

<sup>33</sup> M. Huffman, as cited.

<sup>34</sup> Farwell, *Report*, as cited, 2.



entire holdings at \$5,589,522.<sup>35</sup> During the dry year of 1887 dust cloud after dust cloud rose above the horizon of the South Plains, heralds of north-bound herds bearing a hundred brands, all trailing to the ranges of the XIT. Many of these herds were delivered at the Yellow House. During the thirty days following June 7, 1887, the tally at the Yellow House headquarters increased by 30,000, as thirty different brands were transferred to the Capitol Syndicate. In western Texas many men were anxious to sell, and the stocking of the Syndicate land furnished them the needed outlet. Through parched country to the south and over trails notable for their frequent dry camps, cattle came pouring in, gaunt and weak from long, hot days across the Plains.<sup>36</sup>

About the first herds to arrive [Mr. Mabry said] were those purchased from D. H. and J. W. Snyder; A. G. Boyce was their trail boss. Gus O'Keefe was the trail boss in charge of the cattle bought from C. C. Slaughter. William Ragland was another prominent trail boss who brought up a herd for Rachell Brothers, from Refugio County. All three of these were life-long cowmen. In receiving these cattle it was necessary to class them, as the ones, twos, and threes all differed in price. When a yearling approaches a two, it is difficult to draw the line and say whether it should be classed as a yearling or a two and the same is true as to twos and threes and so on. Experienced cowmen can tell their ages by examining their teeth. When a dispute arises the only way to settle it is to throw the animal down and examine its teeth. There seemed to be little or no trouble classing the different herds until they began to receive the Slaughter herd. When the disputes began to arise as to ages, Colonel Campbell called on William Ragland to help him class this herd. Ragland and O'Keefe began to clash so often and got into [such] heated controversies that Colonel finally called on Mr. Boyce to help in classing. Many of the disputes could only be settled by throwing the animal and examining the teeth. After so long a time the cattle were all received and carried the XIT brand.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-11.

<sup>36</sup> J. E. Moore to J. E. H., February 26, 1927; Frank C. Irwin, as cited; James H. East to J. E. H., September 29, 1927.

<sup>37</sup> Mabry, "Recollections," as cited, 14.

Such was A. G. Boyce's first connection with the XIT ranch. He was soon to become its general manager and continue as such for nearly eighteen years. Boyce was a native of Travis County, Texas. He fought with Terry's Texas Rangers through the Civil War, drove the long cattle trail to California in 1869, engaged in the cattle business with the Snyders in West Texas for several years, and then became manager of the Syndicate in 1887. He was described by a ranch visitor as a "wonderful combination of activity, fearlessness, principle, and purpose." His southern prejudices never left him.

I was entertaining Colonel Boyce one time when he was in Chicago, [said Mr. Walter Farwell]. We went to see a prize fight. We had no more than got to our seats when a fist fight started between a white man and a negro. We happened to be right in the middle of it. The negro began getting the better of it, which was more than the Colonel could stand. The place did not share his southern sentiments, but he yelled out advice to the white man so loudly everybody there heard him:

'For God's sake leave his head alone and kick him on the shins!'<sup>38</sup>

This was the extremely positive man in whom Gus O'Keefe met his match in classing cattle at the Yellow House.

Many of the first herds came from South Texas, but those contracted in 1886 and 1887 were to be of better quality. All were supposed to be bought from above the quarantine line, which meant in West Texas, where stock was larger and of better grade. Many came from the country tributary to the Texas and Pacific railway, and were better than the average Longhorns,<sup>39</sup> though compared with the stocks of today they were of decidedly "indifferent quality."<sup>40</sup> The carrying capacity of the ranch had been esti-

<sup>38</sup> Walter Farwell to J. E. H., September 22, 1927.

<sup>39</sup> George Findlay to Charles Gray, May 20, 1910.

<sup>40</sup> Ms., "The Capitol Syndicate or XIT Ranch."

mated at 300,000 head, but ten acres to the animal was not enough when allowances for drouths and fires were made, and the herd as maintained totalled from 125,000 to 150,000 head.<sup>41</sup> No great movement of cattle to the ranch took place after 1887.<sup>42</sup> Work began upon the improvement of the herd already accumulated, and stocky Hereford, Durham, and Polled Angus sires were imported from Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri to grade up the Texas Longhorns into a stock more tractable and heavier, though less hardy and less picturesque.

<sup>41</sup>*Debenture Prospectus*, 8; *The Tascosa Pioneer*, June 8, 1889; *The Southwestern Reporter*; Farwell, *Report*, as cited, 3-11.

<sup>42</sup>George Findlay to Charles Gray, as cited.



## CHAPTER VII

### *Fences, Windmills, and "Barbecue's" Bad Men*

←————→  
**W**HEN the XIT began to stock its ranges, Tascosa was the only town in the western Panhandle. All supplies offered for sale there by Howard and McMasters and Cone and Duran were freighted in over trails from Springer, New Mexico, and Dodge City, Kansas. Bull teams and mule teams "leaned against" heavy loads along the 242-mile rutted course that joined Tascosa and Dodge. Mexican bull drivers, to whom a shuck-rolled cigarette was comfort and coffee with sugar a great luxury, patiently drove this trail, bringing to Tascosa the provisions demanded by the scattered ranches. The other trail led to the nearest railroad point, Springer, 176 miles away. Therefore, the Tascosa merchants explained that it was the high freight rate alone that caused ordinary sewing needles to sell for ten cents each.<sup>1</sup> But instead of buying its supplies at Tascosa, the Syndicate contracted with freighters to deliver direct from the merchants to the ranch.

Great quantities of supplies and building materials were needed at Buffalo Springs late in 1884, before the first cattle were brought in. The fencing contract for the north end was let to Bill Metcalf, an old buffalo hunter and frontiersman. Abner Taylor wrote W. S. Mabry early in the winter

<sup>1</sup> W. S. Mabry to J. E. H., April 27, 1928; E. C. G. Austen to J. E. H., July 7, 1927; see appendix for logs of the Tascosa-Dodge and Tascosa-Springer trails.

of 1884, requesting him to meet Metcalf at Buffalo Springs and survey this fence line. Because of the permanent water at Buffalo Springs, Perico, and Agua Fria, the erection of windmills and reservoirs was not immediately necessary, and plans were made to stock the north end of the ranch first. On reading the fencing contract, Mabry said:

I found it required the posts to be of cedar and thirty feet apart, and Metcalf had caused them to put in the contract that the surveyor should mark the place for each post by driving down a stake every thirty feet. . . . Metcalf would furnish the crew necessary to do this surveying. Knowing that country as I then did, with no timber in miles of Buffalo Springs, I was amazed at that clause in the contract, that I should drive a stake in the ground every thirty feet. As soon as I saw Metcalf I had him agree . . . that in lieu of a stake I could throw up a small earth mound every thirty feet. I organized my surveying party and commenced the survey.

The winter of 1884 and 1885 was a very cold winter. It began snowing and freezing soon after I began the survey and most of the time the ground was frozen so hard the mound builder could not put his spade into the ground . . . and had to use a pick. On this survey I had only a small "A" tent, large enough for only one man besides myself. The balance of the party slept out in the open. The only fuel we could get was cowchips and the roots of the grease weed, which we later had to dig for. We were very much delayed in our surveying by the snow storms which caused us to lay up. This weather caused Metcalf to lay up too. . . .

In the winter antelope generally collected in good size herds, with a hundred or more to the herd. Days when we would have to lay over Metcalf and I would saddle our horses and ride out to find an antelope. He taught me a new way to hunt antelope. The plan I had always pursued . . . was . . . to slip up on them under cover, if possible. But he . . . would run his horse at full speed toward a large herd, and when in gunshot, dismount, throw the reins over his horse's head, and shoot at the lead antelope. This would turn the herd, another shot or two would get them confused and all bunched up together, and he would usually kill two or three before the herd got beyond gunshot range.

I managed to get this fence line surveyed and marked without causing Metcalf any delay. The pasture fence was completed late in the spring.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Mabry, "Recollections," as cited, 9-10.



Mexican laborers cut the posts from the Canadian breaks. Barbed wire for the four-wire fence was delivered at El Moro, a station near Trinidad. It was freighted to Buffalo Springs in two-horse wagons. Metcalf's contract with the freighters stipulated that they should unload four spools of wire every quarter of a mile along the fence line. Supplies were bought from Forbes Brothers, merchants at Trinidad, who were the receiving and forwarding agents for the ranch. Porter and Clothier, merchants at Springer, shared the Syndicate trade when the freight trains loaded there. These two railroad points supplied Buffalo Springs with articles needed from the outside world.<sup>3</sup>

During 1885 construction of fences on the north end went forward and 162 miles were built. Mile after mile of barbed wire was reeled off as the fences stretched south to the Canadian and beyond. Bands of mustangs, thousands of antelope, and small bunches of buffaloes were enclosed, while cowboys "threw" thousands of cattle upon the range to crowd these wild creatures from the grass. From where the northern cap-rock of the Llano Estacado falls away to the Canadian breaks south to the Yellow House in Hockley County, the XIT range was mainly prairie land and presented greater need for fencing.

Late in 1885 the contract for fencing the southern portion of the ranch was let to J. M. Shannon, a Scotchman who was herding sheep over the hills and flats of Mitchell County and at times working for Coman and Shear, merchants of Colorado City. Today, Shannon is one of the richest men in West Texas. A. T. Clarkson and Ben Griffith were to aid Shannon in building the fence. Clarkson had a great number of ox teams that he intended to use in freighting the wire from Colorado City, and Griffith was to help.

<sup>3</sup> W. S. Mabry to J. E. H., December 27, 1927.

About Christmas time of 1885 a serious prairie fire struck the South Plains country and burned the grass from a scope of country a hundred miles square. Griffith, bound by a verbal contract only, left and went to Arizona. Water became scarce. Clarkson's oxen, dependent upon grass, were worthless, and he secured some fine mules.

With mule teams [said Mr. Shannon], the drivers could put a water barrel on each side of their wagons and haul some hay and do pretty well, but you had to have grass and lots of water for oxen. We hauled water thirty-six miles for use in some places in fencing the Yellow House. There was no grass and we had to keep our horses tied up to our wagons.

We had to hire all our materials freighted from Colorado City, and they cost us \$1.25 a hundred pounds. Clarkson was to have hauled them for a dollar. The freighters would not scatter them along the fence line, but dumped them all in one place. Lots of them threw the material off at Singer's Store, thirty miles from where we wanted it. . . . This meant that we had to re-haul it before we could use it. I never worked so hard in my life as I did there for eighteen months. We put in sixteen hours a day and seven days a week. I erected eighty-five miles of fence at \$110 a mile, and lost about thirty dollars a mile on the contract. But that fence was different from anything in the country—it was put there to stay always.<sup>4</sup>

By the fall of 1886 the Syndicate had contracted and put up 781¼ miles of fence.<sup>5</sup> The west line fence with all its "jogs" was 260 miles long. It began at the northwest corner of the state and ran south 150 miles without a turn. The east line was 275 miles long, and line riders watched 575 miles of outside fence. Estimates place the material in this fence at over three hundred carloads. It cost \$181,000. All Syndicate land was enclosed late in 1886 except about 35,000 acres, which were not fenced immediately because of the hope of exchanging for state land lying inside the enclosed Syndicate land.<sup>6</sup> By the late nineties cross fences

<sup>4</sup>J. M. Shannon to J. E. H., November 27, 1927.

<sup>5</sup>Farwell, *Report*, as cited, 4.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*

cut the XIT into ninety-four pastures, making a total of about 1500 miles of fence. This wire, in single strand, would have stretched for over 6000 miles. Besides the wire, over 100,000 posts, five carloads of wire stays, and one car of staples were required. So many gates were necessary in the corrals and along the fences, that the first general manager just ordered a carload of gate hinges.<sup>7</sup> Line riders rode these fences periodically, some of the divisions kept "fence wagons" running all the time, and regular "fencers" kept the lines in repair.<sup>8</sup>

Telephones were extremely rare in the cow country, but a line was erected from Tascosa to the general headquarters on the Alamocitos in 1888. In the early 1900's a great many telephones were placed upon the ranch. Where possible, the top wire of the fences was used for a telephone line, thus effecting economy in initial expenditure if not in maintenance.<sup>9</sup>

In the Buffalo Springs country there was an abundance of water and the country was stocked with little worry over wells and windmills. Nature was not so prodigal throughout the southern half of the XIT ranch, and, before cattle were placed there in great numbers, artificial reservoirs, tanks, and windmills were necessary. "Barbecue" Campbell let a contract to two well drillers, Marshall and Jones, for a number of wells to be completed by the time the cattle arrived in the summer of 1887. W. S. Mabry and W. D. Twichell, after having run the surveys for the fence lines, made locations for the wells. Marshall and Jones shipped their machines to Big Spring and brought them out to the ranch. Their freight mules were young and green, and, by the time they reached the Yellow House, were

<sup>7</sup>L. Gough, Ms., "Sketch of the XIT Ranch," 2, 3.

<sup>8</sup>H. W. Eubank to J. E. H., July 1, 1926.

<sup>9</sup>*The Tascosa Pioneer*, January 14, 1888; J. P. McDonald to J. E. H., June 25, 1927.

fagged out and almost useless from sore shoulders. Marshall pitched camp, and, after many difficulties, began drilling in high hopes of striking artesian water. He struck adverse formations, the hole went down crooked, and as the time for the delivery of the cattle approached, there began to be worry.

"Barbecue" arrived with his men to receive the cattle, and still Marshall had discovered no gusher, not even a good seep. Upon casting about in search of shallow water Campbell discovered an abundant supply at a depth of about ten feet in the Sod House Draw. Carpenters were put to work building troughs, and when the first cattle arrived they were watered by hand, a double row of men being formed from the well to the troughs, much like an old-fashioned fire bucket line. This was a tremendous task, especially so since the last sixty miles of the drive across the South Plains was a dry one.<sup>10</sup> But Yankee ingenuity was at work, and a carpenter by the name of Williams constructed a long, hollow, wooden box with an endless chain through it. At regular intervals upon this chain he fastened little blocks of wood which fitted into the box as the chain was pulled through, something like the carriers of a grain elevator. By means of a "Fort Scott horse power he so rigged his scheme . . . as to throw water in the trough as rapidly as the cattle drank it."<sup>11</sup>

In the meantime there were heavy losses. Down around the Yellow House cattle were dying for want of water. Billie Ney, wagon boss, gathered from 5000 to 7000 head in one herd and started it for the Sod House. It was too large to drive, but the cowboys drifted it along. After drifting all day, it was held up until about two o'clock in the morning

<sup>10</sup> Mabry, "Recollections," as cited, 12, 13.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

and then started again. Some cattle, wild-eyed, and drawn almost as gaunt as greyhounds, stopped to fight. When one began fighting it was already "as good as dead," as it was dropped behind to die. Along the trail dead cattle lay, markers of a dry drive, monuments to the negligence of the general manager. Reaching the Sod House and the scent of water, the cattle stampeded to the well, crushed the fence around it, and about seventy-five head were lost by falling in and by being crowded and trampled to death.<sup>12</sup> Then rain came, soaked the drouth-bound country, and placed surface water in the lakes, which lasted until Marshall completed one or two wells.<sup>13</sup>

Colonel Campbell complained to Marshall about being so far behind with his drilling contract. Marshall replied that he came out "to bore for water and did not expect to have to bore for tea." Finally, while he was drilling in the valley just south of the Yellow House, water began flowing from the well at the rate of about three gallons a minute. Everybody was elated. Marshall moved his machine about a mile farther south and drilled again. At about the same depth a flow of a gallon and a half a minute started, and the flow in the first well was reduced one-half.

A number of other horse pumps were placed in operation over the southern half of the ranch. They were practicable only where water was shallow—from ten to twenty feet below the surface. Two work horses, used on alternate days, furnished power for these pumps. The water was lifted to the surface by an endless chain carrying half-gallon buckets a few inches apart. Each pump would easily water a thousand head of cattle. One pump was on the

<sup>12</sup> Sid Boykin to J. E. H., June 23, 1927.

<sup>13</sup> Mabry, "Recollections," as cited, 13.





XIT BOYS BRANDING BLACK MULEY CALVES. TWO ROPERS ARE DRAGGING THE CALVES OUT, TWO SETS OF FLANKERS, WITH AN EXTRA MAN, ARE HOLDING CALVES TO BE BRANDED



Frio, two were on the Blackwater, and two were on the Sod House Draw.<sup>14</sup>

Surveyor Mabry continued making locations for wells and for dams across draws. Many artificial reservoirs were formed by impounding the drainage after heavy rains, and soon scores of windmills spun above deep and shallow wells, varying in depth from ten to four hundred feet, but averaging one hundred and twenty-five. The towers averaged thirty-four feet high, and the windmill wheels were twelve to eighteen feet across. Water was pumped into cypress tubs twenty feet in diameter, and conveyed from them to earthen tanks. These tubs were used almost exclusively at first and cost from \$700 to \$1000 each. No one had experimented with earthen tanks, and there was a general supposition that they would not hold water. The first the Syndicate built were lined with coal tar or with a thin layer of cement. The cement cracked, allowing the water to seep through, and tar was equally unsatisfactory. About 1892 experimentation showed that the tanks would hold water with little loss from seepage if thoroughly tramped by cattle and horses. After this discovery several two-hundred-pound sacks of stock salt were placed in the bottom of each tank as soon as it was completed. By the time the cattle had eaten the salt, the tank-dump, the sides, and the bottom were well packed. When the water was turned in there was little seepage. By 1900 there were 335 windmills and one hundred dams upon the ranch, artificial facilities enough to supply 150,000 to 200,000 head of cattle with water. These represented an estimated expenditure of a half million dollars.<sup>15</sup>

As preparations for the first fencing were being made, the

<sup>14</sup>J. E. Moore to J. E. H., February 26, 1927.

<sup>15</sup>Gough, "Sketch," as cited, 3-4; Ms., "The Capitol Syndicate or XIT Ranch," 1; *Land Booklet*, 8; B. P. Abbott to J. E. H., June 24, 1927.

Company began building ranch houses, barns, and corrals. The locations for these were made by the surveyors. At first, Buffalo Springs served as the headquarters for the ranch north of the Canadian. In the spring of 1886, the Company began erecting buildings at the Yellow House, but only the improvements absolutely necessary were erected that year "owing to the great cost of transportation" in freighting one hundred and fifty miles from the Texas and Pacific Railroad.<sup>16</sup>

Coman and Shear, contracting agents for the Company at Colorado City, supplied the Yellow House with groceries, windmills, barbed wire, and other building materials. They kept a number of freighters on the road continuously. During the construction work at the ranch, these freighters struck for a higher rate. Coman and Shear refused to grant it, and the matter began to look serious for the ranch, as building materials were needed. By that time, a number of settlers had come into Jones County to the east, and were trying to make a living by farming. Their efforts in 1887 met with failure on account of the drouth. Hearing of the strike, they swarmed to Colorado City in their two-horse wagons and applied for the freight at the old rate. Thereafter the freighters gave no more trouble.<sup>17</sup>

Soon seven divisions were made of the ranch, each of which was handled from separate headquarters. The ranch houses were well improved residences, and cellars, bunk houses, store rooms, barns and corrals were built. Eventually the XIT came to be known as one of the best equipped and most systematically arranged ranches in the country.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Farwell, *Report*, as cited, 5.

<sup>17</sup> Mabry, "Recollections," as cited, 15.

<sup>18</sup> Gough, "Sketch," as cited, 3.

The need of a centrally located, general headquarters became apparent. The LS Ranch was located on the Alamositos, south of the Canadian, almost in the center of the XIT range. After an exchange of land, late in the summer of 1886, the LS outfit moved over to the Alamoso Creek, about twenty miles east, leaving the XIT in charge of the Alamositos country. Soon the Syndicate built a fence between the two ranges.<sup>19</sup> After the Fort Worth and Denver Railroad built into the Panhandle in 1887, the Company erected a large warehouse at Tascosa. All supplies were bought by wholesale, stock salt by the trainload was stored here, and charged out to the foremen of the different divisions. Then the town of Channing arose on the brow of the cap-rock of the North Plains overlooking the Canadian, and about 1890 the Company moved the general headquarters there.<sup>20</sup> Freight wagons beat trails from the new town to the headquarters at Buffalo Springs, Middle Water, Ojo Bravo, and Rito Blanco. Then Spring Lake, Yellow House, and Escarbada were supplied from Amarillo. With the building of the Pecos Valley and Southern Railroad and the formation of another division, a warehouse was built at Bovina and the four divisions south of the Canadian came there for supplies.

Each division had a freight outfit of its own, consisting of six or eight mules and two wagons. One wagon was fastened behind the other and was known as a "trail wagon." The freighter carried a camp outfit, prepared his own meals while on the trail, fed his teams, hobbled them out, and slept upon the ground. He was never inside a house except when he stopped in town to load and at the ranch to unload. He hauled ten and eleven thousand

<sup>19</sup> James H. East to J. E. H., September 27, 1927.

<sup>20</sup> Gough, "Sketch," as cited, 7; H. W. Eubank to J. E. H., July 1, 1926.



pounds, with which load he daily covered from twenty to twenty-five miles. He freighted month in and month out, every day of the year.<sup>21</sup> And so the Capitol Syndicate transformed the open range of the western Panhandle into what was probably the best equipped ranch in the Southwest.

But in the administration of the ranch all was far from well. In 1887, Colonel Campbell had contracted cattle from a cousin, M. C. Campbell, who went down in Texas far below the tick line, to Lampasas and Burnet, and even to Lee and Milam Counties, for herds. There he bought stock some four dollars cheaper than the better stock to the west. The farther east he went the cheaper he could buy. He contracted with men in these counties, who in turn furnished him with a big string of very inferior East Texas cows.<sup>22</sup> The contracts called for cattle from above the tick line, but he delivered 16,751 head of these cattle at the Yellow House at the contract price.

As the summer of 1887, the time for the delivery of the cattle at the Yellow House, approached, Nations and Maud started 180 head of horses down from Buffalo Springs to be used in receiving the herds. Nations sent Frank Irwin with them, telling him to remain and help receive the cattle.

They sent two shorthorns along to help me [Irwin said]. I had never been farther south than the Torrey dugout on the Canadian, where I had spent two winters, but Mabry told me to go as nearly south as I could from there. I put these two shorthorns with the horses and I rode in front. . . . The Plains were bare and there was not even a bush to go by. We had canteens of water, provisions, and a little tepee, a sheep herder's tent that we carried on a pack horse.

After riding all morning we stopped, and I got down and faced

<sup>21</sup> W. A. Tate to J. E. H., October 31, 1927.

<sup>22</sup> J. Frank Yearwood to J. E. H., December 9, 1927.



Range, O'Fallon and Little Beaver creeks. Horse brand, same as cut.

Other brands  crop both ears.

Also own



Sometimes twice on animal.

#### HOLT & MURPHY.

J. M. HOLT, Miles City.  
J. T. MURPHY, Helena.

J. M. HOLT, Manager,  
BEN H. WOODCOCK, Foreman.



P. O. address, Miles City, Range on Powder river, from Powderville to mouth of Mizpah Timber creek and head of Box Alder.

Horse brand  on right hip.

Other brands  on left side  on right side.

#### MIZPAH LIVE STOCK CO.

J. M. HOLT, Manager



P. O. address Miles City, Mt. Range, Mizpah, upper Box Alder and Cabin Creek east of Chalk Buttes. Cattle branded as in cut on either side.

Horses branded same as cut on left shoulder or thigh.

#### THE HEREFORD LIVESTOCK CO.

C. H. LOUD, Manager,  
FRED HITZFELDT, Foreman.




P. O. Address, Miles City, Mont. Range, Pumpkin Creek and country between Powder and Tongue rivers. Horse brand same as cut on left shoulder.


#### C. D. NEWBERRY, Manager.






P. O. address, Ekalaka, Mont. Range, Spring Creek and Powder river.

Horse brand  left thigh.

Also own horses with  on right shoulder.

Other brands  left side,

 left hip,  right side.

 Left hip or side.


Ear marks—1891 calves underslope both ears, 1892 calves, split left ear.


#### RYAN BROS.





P. O. address, Leavonworth, Kan. Range, Big Bend of Musselshell, 100 miles northwest of Miles City.



Also own   on left hip.

 Left side, neck and side.

 any place on left side.

 on left hip

 left side and hip.

Horses branded  

Vent  

#### C. B. MENDENHALL.



P. O. address, Hunter's Hot Springs, Mont. Range, Clear Creek, Bad Route, Cedar, Cherry and Custer creeks. Cattle branded same as cut on both sides. Horse brand me as cut on both shoulders.

#### THE CAPITOL FREEHOLD LAND & INVESTMENT CO.

O. C. CATO, Foreman.

Principal office 148 Market St. Chicago, Ill. P. O. address Miles City, Mont. Range: Head of Red Water, Cedar, Cherry and Custer creeks, Dawson and Custer Cos. Horse brand X IT on right thigh.



Cattle of 1893 branded  on right jaw.

#### PETER JACKSON



P. O. address, Forsythe, Mont. Range on Little Forcypine and Horse Creek Double dewlap on neck. Horse brand, same as cut on thigh.

#### THE BLOOM CATTLE CO.

FRANK G. BLOOM, General Manager.  
JOHN SUKVANT, Foreman.







Post Office address Malta, Montana. Range, north side of Milk river in Choteau and Valley counties.



Horse brands  

Also own cattle branded

 left shoulder  left ribs and left hip.  
and  
 left shoulder  left ribs and left hip.

#### SANTA RITA LAND AND CATTLE CO

COLIN CAMERON, General Manager, P. O. address, Lochiel, Arizona.



Range on Milk river, Valley county, Mont.

#### SAN RAFAEL CATTLE CO.



SIDNEY THOMAS, Foreman.



Post Office address, Saco, Montana.



Horse brand same as cattle brand

Other brands  

BRANDS OF THE XIT AND NEIGHBORING RANCHES IN MONTANA, AS THEY APPEARED IN AN EARLY MILES CITY NEWSPAPER



SWIMMING A HERD ACROSS THE YELLOWSTONE IN THE DAYS OF THE MONTANA TRAIL. THE XIT COWBOYS APPEAR TO BE DRESSED IN WHITE SHIRTS, BUT THEY ARE EQUIPPED WITH LIFE PRESERVERS INSTEAD

south. When the other two came up they put the tent pole down on the ground pointing due south, so that we could have it to go by if it was cloudy when we got up the next morning. We would gather a few buffalo chips, make some coffee, eat, and then we would go to hobbling horses. We would work from then until night at this, as we had to hobble every one of them. Without unsaddling our horses, we would stretch ropes from the saddle horns, and, with each man holding the end of a rope, form a three-cornered corral out of which we caught our horses. After we had hobbled all of them, we staked out our saddle horses. We carried no stake pins but dug holes eight or ten inches deep, put our pocket knives through the knots in the ends of our ropes, slipped these into the holes, turned the knives across, and filled the holes up with dirt. With a long rope a horse could not pull them up. The first night out we heard a roar like thunder. The country was full of mustangs and a bunch of them ran right through our horses trying to carry them off. That was why we had to hobble.

They had received no cattle at the Yellow Houses when we got there. They had some men out gathering cow-chips and digging mesquite roots to use in branding. There were three or four big old awkward boys there from the timber down in Texas and they wanted to know where we came from. We told them Buffalo Springs, and they wanted to know where that was. I had been sent down to have charge of one wagon, but I didn't like the outfit and I pulled out for Old Tascosa.

On the way back I rode at night, as my eyes had almost gone out on the way down. I stretched the tent about daylight every morning, and slept all I could until along in the evening. Before I got to the breaks I saw something away ahead of me, and coming nearer I saw it was a horse. It looked thirty feet high at first. I got within about 300 yards of him and saw it was a mustang asleep. I got down and tightened up my cinches and moved up as close as I thought I could to him easily, and then made a run and was on him before he fairly woke up. I roped him and he fought terrible. He was old and his teeth were worn off. I throwed him and put a "swaller-fork the right," the XIT ear-mark on him, and turned him loose. I went on to Tascosa and Buffalo Springs. . . . Nations wanted to know what I was doing back up there. I told him I would not stay with those cotton-pickers down on the south end. He said that if I had stayed there I would soon have had more money than I ever had in my life. I asked him how. He replied that M. C. Campbell would be there to turn over some cattle to "Barbecue" and that he wanted me there to help do the counting and the tallying . . . and the plan was for us to tally three or four head for every animal that



went through. The Company did not know of the crooked deal until about a year later.<sup>23</sup>

Nor was this graft all. B. H. Campbell allowed his cousin to run in yearlings as two-year-olds, thereby getting several dollars more a head; he allowed his cowboys to "hair brand"<sup>24</sup> cattle to be rustled out of the pasture later and branded as their own; he exercised slight control over his men; and he allowed the ranch to become a rendezvous for rustlers, outlaws, and hard cases of all kinds.<sup>25</sup> Realizing that something was wrong, John V. Farwell wrote to A. L. Matlock, of Montague, asking him to make an investigation.

Matlock, a lawyer, was a member of the Texas legislature when the Capitol Reservation was set aside. The letter from Mr. Farwell announced the coming of George Findlay, who would accompany him to the ranch, and in whom he might confide if he wished.<sup>26</sup> George Findlay came to the John V. Farwell Company in 1872, and from then until his death, January 24, 1927, he served the Farwell interests with faithful efficiency.<sup>27</sup> These two men came to the Yellow House in the summer of 1887, the former under guise of looking after nearby personal property, the latter as a representative of the Company.

We got to the Yellow House [said Mr. Matlock] and found three men there, the range boss, the bookkeeper, Rollen Larrabee, and D. B. Braid, the surveyor. We asked where the manager was and they said he was down near Colorado City. Findlay asked who was in charge and they said that the range boss was. I knew then that I had a job on my hands. I was District Attorney at Vernon some years before and had

<sup>23</sup> Frank C. Irwin, as cited.

<sup>24</sup> In hair branding, the iron was held against the animal just long enough to burn the hair, not the hide. The hair grew out, effacing the signs of brand, and a rustler could then put his own brand on the animal.

<sup>25</sup> A. L. Matlock, as cited.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> John V. Farwell to W. S. Mabry, January 25, 1927.



kept a mob from hanging this same man on condition that he would leave the state and never come back. Now he asked me if I thought he ought to leave the ranch. He said that he supposed that I was after him. I told him no, and asked him why he thought so.

"Well," he said, "I had to leave Vernon. I reckon I ought to resign now."

"Not on my account," I told him. "If you suit Colonel Campbell, you can stay."

He seemed satisfied at that and walked off. I told Findlay what he was, and that his being there was evidence that something was wrong. Directly a man walked by whom I recognized as the brother-in-law of the range boss and a horse thief. I pointed him out to Findlay and said that the ranch must be harboring thieves. Campbell returned in a few days and I presume the boss told him that I was there, and that he guessed I was after him. Findlay and I were sitting on a wagon tongue talking when he and Campbell walked up.

"You know this man?" Campbell said.

"Yes," I answered.

"What about him?" he continued.

"He is a very good cowman," I replied.

Campbell repeated his question and I answered him as at first. Then I turned to the range boss and said:

"Did you bring Colonel Campbell over here to get a recommendation?"

"No," he said, "but I told him that you knew me."

"Well," I said, turning to Campbell, "he is from a family of thieves noted for horse theft, cattle theft, and the like; but if he suits you, all right."<sup>28</sup>

Matlock talked with the cowboys, saw men working there—or upon the payroll—who had been run out of other sections of Texas, saw the ranch harboring horse thieves, saw lax business management, evidences of theft, and general lawlessness.

Upon his return to Montague he reported his impressions and received a wire, brief, but expressive enough: "Go take charge of the ranch and run it as though it were your own." He went. At Colorado City, one hundred and

<sup>28</sup>A. L. Matlock, as cited.

fifty miles from the Yellow House, he met R. M. Bourland of Cooke County, whom he had decided to make general range manager. But that individual, as became one judicious, had already looked the situation over. In effect, he said that in good health he was worth much more to a wife and children back in the settlements than he could possibly be worth to the XIT cows after being shot full of holes.

Matlock went on to the ranch where the range boss, whom he had once saved from the rope, had threatened to kill him. In casting about for a general range manager, Matlock chose A. G. Boyce, who, after delivering the remnant herds of the MOS and Horseshoe T Cross cattle of the Snyder Brothers, was then out on the range trying to keep the cattle from perishing for water. Matlock sent him a note. He came, excited over the threats being made against Matlock's life. These two men, to fear unknown, vigorously began the reorganization of the XIT. Their work cleared the western Panhandle frontier of desperadoes and placed the ranch upon a sound working basis.

With very few exceptions, every cowboy and foreman upon the ranch was ousted. Then came this range boss, Matlock's acquaintance of old, with ten of his gunmen, to bring an end to the administration of this lawyer who had presumed to give up the pursuit of Blackstone for the pursuit of cattle. They met at the Yellow House, and old-timers tell that soon thereafter the population of New Mexico was slightly increased by several horsemen who wore their guns low and left their reputations behind them. Matlock was still on the range.

"Barbecue" Campbell did not wait to receive all the cattle. Before Matlock arrived he had been uneasily sleeping in his tent, a shotgun by one side of his "roll," a

Winchester by the other. Then a "tough hombre" named Spencer, who fed his private horse with Company feed, was reported by a boy, and Campbell fired him. The man whipped the boy, and Campbell, becoming frightened, fired the boy for doing his duty and reinstated the dishonest cowboy.

Events were moving too rapidly for Campbell. He had a fine team "hooked" to a buckboard, and with a special bodyguard, mounted upon a cowpony, left the field behind him and fled ingloriously to the railroad. The bodyguard accompanied him only a part of one day, it is said, but they had traveled so swiftly that it took him two and a half days to get back with his jaded pony.<sup>29</sup>

Campbell returned to Wichita. His example rests a contradiction to the well-worn axiom of the victor and the spoils. Campbell lost, but how much he gained is a matter of speculation. Some say that upon his return he bought the street railways of his home town;<sup>30</sup> others, that he purchased a soap factory.<sup>31</sup> Frank Irwin learned that for every hundred cattle that passed between the tally men, they were supposed to tie three knots in their saddle strings, a ratio of three to one. He understood "Barbecue" had some \$300,000 of Syndicate money<sup>32</sup> with which to manufacture soap. But Irwin washed his hands clean of the deal.

With Campbell gone, Spencer, of individual horse feeding note, lorded his way over the Yellow House camp. A passerby, disillusioned after going to the Nogal mines to pick up nuggets, stopped on his way back to gather cowchips for the branding fires. He was energetic and heaped

<sup>29</sup> J. Frank Yearwood, as cited.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> M. Huffman, as cited.

<sup>32</sup> Frank Irwin, as cited.

up a pile by the corral fence ten feet high. Mounting a bronc, Spencer spurred him to the top. Then with a cowboy yell he caught his pony with his rowels and came down amid a shower of "prairie coal." Boyce was present. This old trail driver who had contended with outlaws along the hard, hard cattle trail to California in the late sixties, was never known to run from trouble. He told Spencer to ride until he had left the XIT range behind him, and he handled other undesirable "bad" men in the same way. Findlay, Matlock, and Boyce were bringing system and splendid organization to the ranch. From Buffalo Springs to Casas Amarillas, approximately two hundred miles, where no telephone nor advanced means of locomotion operated to annihilate distance, where the fastest communication was the flying feet of a cowpony and the only messenger a puncher of cows, where law was so distant as to be impotent, "the Syndicate" was bringing development, law, and promise out of the desert.



## CHAPTER VIII

### *A Long Fight for Law*

←—————→  
**W**HEREVER cattle have been grazed extensively on the open range the rustler has always swung a wide loop. But rustling never became quite as profitable upon the Plains as in broken or timbered country, where ravine or forest offered seclusion from watchful cowboy eyes and protection from flying lead.

Though the Plains country in general had enough cattle theft to give added zest to range life, the central portion of the XIT Ranch was the scene of the heaviest depredations. Here the Canadian breaks, with their creeks, canyons, hills, and scrub timber offered protection for such outlawry. Now, in the cow country, next to horse rustling, cattle theft ranked high in the category of crime, and until a comparatively recent day along the western line of the XIT, men shot first and asked questions afterward.

Above personal comfort and above personal safety for the cowboy, was the welfare of the herd that he had in charge. Attesting adherence to this unwritten law of the Texas ranges are cowboy graves, unmarked and unknown, along forgotten trails from south of the Rio Bravo to north of parallel forty-nine. Next to the cowboy riding range, the greatest enemy of the rustler was the barbed wire fence. Cattle thieves, to be successful, must be mobile. The XIT was fenced, but across its west line in New Mexico a great open country stretched northward to the headwaters of the



Canadian and Cimarron, and southward beyond the Pecos to the Capitan Mountains. One fence could be but slight restriction to the movement of cattle into this wide area. Topography conspired with the rustlers of eastern New Mexico to give the cowboys of the Escarbada Division much trouble.

A third big factor favoring profitable cattle theft was the remoteness of law, the lack of judicial force. There were courts and sheriffs at Las Vegas and Tascosa, but both were remote from the Escarbada. But even when a cow thief had been brought to the bar, it was almost impossible to convict him. Many of the jurors, used to the less exacting days of the range business, were loath to sentence a culprit for eating a neighbor's beef or branding his overgrown calves. The grand juries indicted, the petit juries acquitted, as is their wont, and so rustling flourished.

Cattle were stolen in many different ways. Bold and powerful rustler bands sometimes rode upon a range and drove off small bunches or even herds. Favored by natural conditions and a very thinly settled country, they often made good their escape to sell the stolen cattle or place upon them a brand of their own before the owner discovered his loss. At times their operations were known but they were powerful enough to steal openly and with impunity.

The practice of eating a neighbor's beef was once general upon the ranges of Texas. Hungry men killed a fat beef wherever they found one, regardless of owner, and in those days of lax business methods and open-handed hospitality, such action was above reproach. But foreign capital came, the barbed wire fence confined each brand to its own range, the happy-go-lucky pastoral ways of the seventies became a business of exacting methods, and killing strays came to be regarded as theft.



MONTANA SCENES: A MONTANA PUNCHER; THE XIT OUTFIT BREAKING CAMP; THE OUTFIT IN CAMP WITH COWBOYS CATCHING HORSES FROM A ROPE CORRAL

Indian City Jan 10 1894  
Mr Geo Fimelley  
144 Market St  
Chicago

Dear Sir The weather has been considerably colder for the past eight days the thermometer went down as low as 36 below zero one night there has been no drifting storms to disturb stock in any way & the river is clear of cattle so far.

There is a chinook blowing here to day and it is thawing rapidly.  
Yours very truly  
O. C. Cato

O. C. CATO MANAGED THE MONTANA RANCH AND REPORTED TO THE  
MANAGING TRUSTEE GENERAL RANGE CONDITIONS. (SEE APPENDIX FOR  
AN ACCOUNT OF THE MONTANA RANCH)

Brand burning was another method employed by the rustlers. It required skill and was always risky. Brand burners simply burned the original brand into another figure or symbol.

But the most general form of theft practiced upon the XIT was that of mavericking, which usually took the form of stealing large, unbranded calves. Mavericking, along with "beefing" and brand burning, is sometimes designated "petty stealing." But losses may be very heavy from such rustling. They were for the XIT.

Within its own fences and by its own management the first and worst steal was made upon the ranch. Managers were changed and Matlock drove many outlaws from the ranch. Boyce followed with an aggressive expulsion of other undesirables, but in spite of the precautions taken, there was trouble with men who once ate XIT chuck and received XIT "time."

One of the first wagon bosses at Buffalo Springs was Ruck Tanner. Working the Canadian Roundup with him was Dick Pencham. They were cow hands of typical Texan efficiency. They knew the country, knew cattle and horses, and knew the devious ways of the rustler. Caught in Matlock's and Boyce's ropes of reorganization, they "packed their beds" and hunted another range. They rode away to Old Tascosa to consider their dismissal with numerous glasses from over the bar, and being men not without malice, they gave the ranch much trouble.

Ruck, as leader of a band of rustlers, began depredations upon Syndicate cattle in July, 1888.<sup>1</sup> About 1890, upon an election day, Ruck and several of his men were at the Rito Blanco. Coming together near the ranch house, they sent a boy after Colonel Boyce, supposedly to call him out and

<sup>1</sup>M. Huffman, as cited.

kill him. Boyce, brave to the point of rashness, walked out to them alone, roundly cursed the leaders, told them to open fire, but that the first man he was going to kill was Ruck Tanner. Not one of the band made a suspicious move.

Tanner and Pencham, in company with others, bought the VIX brand on the Rito Blanco, to the west of Tascosa and, with this as a base and with a legally registered brand to add unto, they operated along the Canadian. Industrious "little men" they were, and the increase of their herd far exceeded what the most ambitious cow would have aspired to by natural means. Eighteen strays were seen in their little pasture at one time, and the beef they ate and sold in Tascosa was a prodigious lot to come from only those hides which they had inspected. Doubting the legality of their operations, but proving nothing upon them, Boyce gave them trouble as long as they stayed.<sup>2</sup>

Then there appeared in a homestead on the Rito Blanco another man of small means but vaulting ambition by the name of Mat Atwood. His vocation was mavericking, at which he was no amateur.

Calves large enough to live upon grass continue to follow their mothers until weaned by them, or, are separated from them by the cowboys, which is the general practice under the new order of wire fences. Unbranded, the calf's ownership is clearly established by the brand of the cow it follows. Weaned and cast upon its own resources, it becomes a maverick—an animal whose ownership is undetermined because of lack of mark or brand, whether six months or six years old. In the days of open range, the maverick belonged, theoretically and in practice, to the first man having cattle upon that range who roped and applied his iron to him. The man with one hundred head of cattle often

<sup>2</sup> S. K. Bynum to J. E. H., February 13, 1928.



branded more mavericks into his own title than the man who had 5,000 head upon the range—obviously an unjust distribution, but often allowed. With fences, clearly the mavericks found within an enclosure belonged to the brand ranging therein, and the man from the outside who burned his heraldry into the hide of a maverick had committed an act of theft. Thus progressed the ethics of the range.

Mat Atwood would ride over into the XIT pastures, find large unbranded calves, cut them off from their mothers, and run them over to his homestead. Mother cows and their calves, upon becoming separated, back-track for miles to reach the spot at which each last saw the other. The old Texas Longhorns would travel farther, guided by an uncanny sense of direction and smell, than cattle of better blood. Because of this instinct, the rustler was forced to wean the calves he stole before he applied his brand, or have them so secured that they could not return to their mothers. A calf that showed up on the home range switching its tail over a fresh brand told a more vivid story than human tongue, and often precipitated a sixshooter and Winchester draped cavalcade upon the trail of the owner of the brand. Mat might keep the big calves in a corral a short while, cut the muscles which supported their eyelids so that they dropped closed, and turn them loose in his pasture. Thus separated from their mothers, they "bawled their heads off" for a few days. Getting no response and not being able to see to return to their mothers, they became hungry, groped around for food and were soon weaned. The muscles of their eyes healed, but the lids always drooped slightly.

Another method employed by the rustlers was to burn the calves between the toes with a hot iron, making their feet too sore for them to walk. A few rustlers may have

followed the even more brutal practice of splitting their tongues so they could not nurse. Safely weaned from parental milk and attention by the time any of these wounds healed, they ceased bawling for their mothers, the rustler placed his own brand upon them, and they were his by right of dangerous industriousness and legally registered brand.<sup>3</sup> Then, if the calf happened to find its way back to the home range and its mother and was there discovered, the rustler explained that in branding his own calves this one, at the time among them, had been branded by mistake. To be doubly cautious, he often employed several maverick brands. These fictitious brands were used to throw a watchful rider off his guard. When all danger seemed past, the rustler's brand appeared upon the animal, and, if anyone questioned its ownership, he named an original fictitious owner of some distant place. Winter time was open season on the rustler, as then he was busiest. Then, evading the range riders, he "still hunted" through the grazing cattle, picking up big calves that had been missed during the summer and fall brandings.<sup>4</sup>

By these methods did Mat Atwood, and, more extensively, the rustlers along the New Mexico line depredate upon XIT calves. Finally a charge was secured against Mat, and Bob Neely arrested him. While he was being brought back to the Panhandle upon the train, he jumped through a window and escaped. Rustlers were hard to catch and hold, harder to bring to justice.<sup>5</sup>

Along the western side of the Escarbada, rustlers from the Endee and Tucumcari country of New Mexico gave more trouble than any others. There transient desperadoes

<sup>3</sup>R. L. Duke to J. E. H., July 6, 1927; Ira Aten to J. E. H., February 26, 1928; C. R. Smith to J. E. H., August 11, 1927.

<sup>4</sup>Ira Aten, as cited.

<sup>5</sup>R. L. Duke to J. E. H., July 6, 1927.



MONTANA SCENES: CUTTING CATTLE AT A ROUNDUP; CATTLE IN THE SHIPPING CORRALS AT FALLON; SWIMMING THE YELLOWSTONE WITH THE REMUDA BEFORE STARTING THE HERD ACROSS

Lusk, Wyo.  
June 27 1892

Mr Geo. Findlay  
Chicago

Dear Sir

I pass through Lusk  
to day. Good grazing. Moderately. I have to  
leave a steer every day or two. it looks like it  
is impossible to fatten a local steer.

My cattle are picking up and looking very well  
with the exception of a few hard ones.

Horses are doing well here. I hope that I will  
get well help me out a great deal.

We had a stampede back about twenty  
miles from here and is out some cattle yet.  
He is still hunting for them. he is the find  
herd now. Chris is ahead of me.

Yours at present.

J. C. Moore

TRAIL BOSSES WROTE GEORGE FINDLAY, FIRST MANAGING TRUSTEE,  
GIVING AN ACCOUNT OF THEIR PROGRESS ON THE TRAIL

paused long enough to cast their ropes with men who lived by their illegal use. They were a hard set when the XIT stocked its ranges.

A reputed gun-fighter was named as one of the first foremen of the Escarbada. Jim Cook, wearing his two six-shooters and his ill-boding reputation with equal grace, rode in to do battle with the cow thieves to the west. Aggressive and over-bearing, it is said, he was eternally at odds with the riders across the line. Not only that, but he had trouble with one of his own men, and when Cook started to draw, the man protested that he was unarmed. Pulling his gun on the left, Cook pitched it across to the cowboy and told him to pick it up and defend himself. Had he made a move to follow the suggestion, Cook would have killed him before his hand reached the gun. Women, not outlaws, caused the fall toward which Cook was riding.

Over to the east the little town of La Plata had grown up to become the county seat of Deaf Smith. Cook forsook doing battle with cattle rustlers and entered the jousts with cupid when a young lady from Kansas City visited there. Then, when she returned to Kansas City, he succeeded in having the Escarbada Ranch designated a post office in order that he would not have to suffer the delays of uncertain trips to La Plata for mail.<sup>6</sup> Femininity and cattle mix poorly; so in his place came good humored, whistling, hard working and hard riding Mac Huffman.<sup>7</sup>

Within a year Spring Lake needed a foreman and Mac was placed in charge of that fine range. Jim McLaren, comical Jim, who bought such delicacies as butter and eggs on the trail and charged them up to the Company as potatoes, took the place he left. Jim was not the type of man needed

<sup>6</sup> M. Huffman, as cited.

<sup>7</sup> J. W. Stevens to J. E. H., November 23, 1927.



and was replaced by the sheriff of Castro County, an ex-Texas Ranger of power and force, who, in handling lawless elements, believed strongly in the efficacy of fear. Under the ten years administration of Ira Aten, who took charge in 1895, the Escarbada was operated with a minimum of loss. "I controlled them through fear," he said, and his methods were efficient.

As a Texas Ranger upon the frontier he had formed associations which now proved of much value. From El Paso he brought Wood Saunders, another Ranger seasoned in border service, and from the company of Captain W. J. McDonald, he secured for detached duty "Big Ed" Connell.<sup>8</sup> With modesty commensurate with his size, Connell gave his complete story of several years service with the ranch: "Stealing wasn't so bad; they just had us there as a preventive."<sup>9</sup> Saunders was placed at Trujillo Camp to watch the New Mexico line. Connell was placed at a camp named Tombstone, to watch the men of "The Strip."<sup>10</sup>

Once each day a rider, armed with sixshooter and Winchester, rode the fences from these camps, and it became extremely hazardous to be found along one without evident legitimate business. The situation in the west became so tense that the riders began taking a shot at every man seen near the line in New Mexico, not so much with malicious intent, but just "as a preventive." The rustlers often tore the fence down so that it appeared to have been done by cattle, and drifted a bunch of cows and calves out. Whenever this was discovered, Aten called his two main fighting men, Connell and Saunders, and with an armed outfit of cowboys, crossed with his wagon into New Mexico as quickly as possible and rounded up the country. By fast

<sup>8</sup> Ira Aten, as cited.

<sup>9</sup> Ed Connell to J. E. H., October 31, 1927.

<sup>10</sup> Ira Aten, as cited.

work he was usually able to gather most of his cattle before the rustlers had picked up the calves.

Confidently expecting to be killed when he went to the ranch, Ira Aten doubled his life insurance but kept his six-shooter oiled.<sup>11</sup> In making his rides about the ranch he never traveled the same trails twice. Riding out by one course, he returned by another. The windows at the Escarbada were painted a dark green and heavy shades hung over those at Trujillo. In camp Aten always sat back beyond the light of the fire, and if a stranger came to the wagon, he never slept until he identified him or ascertained his business.<sup>12</sup> At Trujillo the line rider never stepped from camp without his sixshooter. If a rider appeared at night, the cowboy was certain of his identity before admitting him, and, if uncertain, he maintained the advantage. Eternal vigilance was the price of life.<sup>13</sup>

In order for the foreman to be in close touch with the men at Trujillo and Tombstone, a camp diary was kept under lock in a small box. The foreman carried one key to the lock, the cowboy keeping the camp carried the other. Daily entries were made. Upon the fly leaf of one of these diaries is this note.

Tombstone Camp,  
January 1st, 1902.

To Camp Men

Keep the name and date of every man who stays all night, passes camp, or seen on range. If the person is a suspicious character take a full description of man and color & brand of horse where from & where going, etc. The above instruction must be closely carried out. This book must be kept in lock up in box for that purpose. [Then a supplementary note was added in pencil.] Also date of each ride number of dead cattle mills out of fix, etc.

Ira Aten Foreman.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Ira Aten, as cited.

<sup>12</sup> C. R. Smith to J. E. H., August 11, 1927; *Ibid.*, March 20, 1928.

<sup>13</sup> Ira Aten, as cited.

<sup>14</sup> "Tombstone Camp Diary, 1902-1903."

Choosing at random from among its many entries, one may read in the Trujillo Camp Diary of 1902 and 1903:

Dec. 29th. I rode the Mexico fence—

Jan.—4th. Frank Cavender came over to have small pox—

Jan. 26. [In Aten's handwriting] Ira Aten came to camp at dinner today.

. . . I want dates, passing of people & circumstances reported more closely.

Feb'y. 13th. Bad day sleeted all day, we soaked.<sup>15</sup>

Feb'y. 19th. Greased mills chopped ice, rode Mexico fence and rounded up bulls! . . .<sup>16</sup>

Jan. the 4—1903. Rode to Caps dam then to Holy dam then to the Mohairs & to Chalkey and down the Mohairs to Henry the first, from their to camp found the cow dead that we dipt

9. Sand Storm done nothing.<sup>17</sup>

The Tombstone Diary, of the same years likewise gives intimate glimpses of cow camp life:

Aug. 25. Two wagons loaded with chickens & Kids passed Camp from Tucumcari. . . .

Aug. 17 Skined—3—cows came on to camp found the tombstone mill out of whack. fraters [freighters] past by.

April 23—1903 rode Phone line then rode bog Skined—4—cows one with ticks Came back found that an unnoen friend had been at camp prised into grane house taken one sack of grane.

Ma 30 1903 One man past Camp driving to black asses with a long whip in Buggy Concord Springs on it he looked suspicious he come and watered and went to feed and just got up and drug it.<sup>18</sup>

June 22—1903 Three men passed here on foot back, going from Rag Town to Hereford at the rate of miles an hr They looked kinder lank in the sinch [through the girth] and week in the hine legs.<sup>19</sup>

27. Sept. Old Dynimite was bitten by rattle snake

28 of Feb. . . . 20 calves died with Black leg during Feb.<sup>20</sup>

When Aten, riding over the ranch, reached the camps to find the line rider away, he opened the box with a key

<sup>15</sup>A cowboy expression for loafing.

<sup>16</sup>During the winter the cowboys cut ice from frozen troughs and tanks so that the cattle might drink.

<sup>17</sup>"Trujillo Camp Diary, 1902-1903."

<sup>18</sup>In cowboy parlance "to drag it" is to depart precipitately, or without ado.

<sup>19</sup>"Tombstone Camp Diary, 1902-1903."

<sup>20</sup>"Tombstone Camp Diary, 1902-1903."

which he carried and made an entry of his visit, leaving any orders he wished, often telling from whence he came but rarely his destination.<sup>21</sup> Among his significant entries is this:

Aten ate dinner here today. I dont want the Glasscock [trail] outfit showed any courtesies whatever. Make them go out of pasture as soon as possible. They tied the phone wire down yesterday morning on Mex line . . . where they had stayed all night. . . . Look through there cattle good. . . . I expect to go & meet them to day and demand an explanation. You better stay at camp tomorrow. Be at Correll Lake Friday night.

Aten.

And so the daily entries ran, sometimes significant, often of little import. When a new man replaced an old line rider, an inventory of items about the camp was made. W. S. Kirk took charge at Tombstone April 14, 1903, and wrote, with rather picturesque spelling, his own inventory:

1 hatchate  
1 ax  
1 saw  
1 spade  
1 post auger  
1 schisle  
1 wrench  
1 pare nipers  
1 oil can  
1 skinning knife  
9 hens and one rustler<sup>22</sup>

Nobody but the line rider and Aten were to see these camp diaries. The practice was peculiar to these two camps on the Escarbada and was one means of many by which the foreman attempted to keep track of the cattle rustlers and of his own men.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Ira Aten, as cited.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Ira Aten, as cited.

Not only did the large corporations suffer from cattle theft, but little men as well. Among the New Mexico cowmen suffering from the depredations of these outlaws was an old Indian fighter of bellicose disposition by the name of Sam Gohlson. Intent upon murder, some of the Spikes Gang once chased him off the cap-rock. This rustler organization of some six or eight men was led by the four Spikes brothers and Henry Hawkins. They were joined by roving riders who never left their guns behind them.<sup>24</sup>

Finally Gohlson became "riled up." He and Birch Smith with a following of New Mexico cowboys and cowmen sent a hurry call to Ira Aten. With Joe Rhea and W. H. Lay, Aten crossed to the Smith ranch on the cap-rock south of Endee. Fifteen or twenty armed men were waiting about the ranch, their impatience to be in the saddle indicated by nervous jerky jingle of spurs. Cowponies stood restless under heavy, Winchester-rigged saddles. Soon a determined little battalion rode down into the breaks and worked its way up a cedar-grown canyon to Mesa Redonda, the admirably situated rendezvous of the outlaws ten miles farther west. A regular fortress, a house with loopholes, had been built upon the Mesa to command the only approach.

When Aten's crowd surrounded the house, a feminine face glanced furtively out upon the cowboys. None of the band was there. Reining their horses around, the posse back-trailed down the canyon to ride directly upon Dick Spikes. Several cowboys threw down upon him, and Aten dismounted to draw his Winchester from its scabbard and take Spikes' sixshooter. Behind the prisoner, Lay sat his horse in readiness. As Aten reached for the sixshooter, Spikes threw his hand down over it saying:

"I won't let you have my gun to kill my brother."

<sup>24</sup>Ira Aten, as cited; Ed Connell to J. E. H., October 31, 1927.



"Don't pull her, Dick!" yelled Lay. "I'll kill you if you pull her" and with remarkably good gumption, Dick didn't "pull her."

Almost immediately two men appeared on a little knoll down the canyon. Aten, hoping to round them up, sent Gohlson with men to the north of the knoll, Lay with others to the south, and he and Rhea leaned over on their horses and rode straight for it. The men had taken in the situation, and dropped back out of sight.

"Look here, Aten," called Rhea as they sped up the hill with guns out, "this is the first time I was ever in anything like this. Shall I begin shooting as soon as I see them?"

"No, don't do that," Aten replied. "Wait until I tell you and then shoot, and shoot to kill."

They rode over the hill and down upon one of the rustlers, a boy about eighteen years of age. His hands went up at the command, but he refused to tell where the other had gone. He admitted that he was working for the Spikes boys but denied knowledge of any rustling. Having nothing positive against Dick Spikes, Aten gave him some very definite instructions as to his future conduct, to which he subsequently paid no attention, however, and then released him. The boy was taken to the Smith ranch.

So serious had the raiding become, and so intense was the feeling, that only with difficulty did Aten, Lay, and Rhea prevent the cowmen from hanging this boy, who, they were convinced, was nothing but a tool.

"What do you want to do?" demanded seasoned old Sam Gohlson, "turn him loose to go on depredating upon us?"

"No," Aten replied. "If you let him go, we will send him back home and guarantee that he will never come back. If he does, then hang him."

Listening to the discussion of the means of his disposal,

the boy broke down and "begged manfully" to be sent back to his mother. All favored hanging except Aten, Lay, and Rhea, but they were men of unusual force, and their wishes prevailed. Aten carried the boy over toward Canyon and told him to "git." He got.<sup>25</sup>

Having escaped so lightly, the Spikes gang continued their raids and again the New Mexico cowmen met. Word was sent to the XIT cowboys, but they were late in arriving. Finding that the rustlers were away from the Mesa, the cowboys took a stand near the mouth of the canyon. Confident of their security and their strength, the outlaws, returning to Mesa Redonda, rode full into the trap. Dick Spikes and another were shot from their saddles; a third was shot through the back as, with the remainder of the band, he whirled his horse to make a run for the shelter of the cedar brakes and hills. Several horses were shot down. The leaders of the Spikes gang were killed<sup>26</sup> and Mesa Redonda, south of Tucumcari, became a storied landmark for the prosaic present.

I happened to be at Tombstone Camp one night [said the vigilant Aten] when a fellow came along and stopped to stay all night. I had never seen him before. He had his sixshooter on and talked ugly all night. I found that he was a cow thief. The next morning I said to him:

"Now get your horse, saddle, and go. Take that road and never come back. When you start, don't even look back. If you do," I added as I picked up my Winchester, "I am going to shoot you right through the middle."

He went, and never looked back.<sup>27</sup>

In spite of such severe measures mavericking continued. In 1906, after Aten had left the ranch and R. L. (Bob) Duke had charge of the northern portion upon which cattle were yet being ranged, New Mexico rustlers were still coming

<sup>25</sup> Ira Aten, as cited.

<sup>26</sup> Ed Connell, as cited; Ira Aten, as cited.


<sup>27</sup> Ira Aten, as cited.

into Texas and stealing as many as twenty-five head of cattle at a time. Bob rode into Endee one evening and had supper at the hotel. Across the table from him sat a man and woman who, in collusion, raided upon Texas brands, and at the ends of the table sat two men who had that day conspired to kill him.

A daughter of the hotel owner, with whom one of the Syndicate cowboys was enamoured, over-heard the plot and told Duke of it. Originally these two rustlers planned to get him into a poker game, start a row and kill him. Finding he did not play poker, they conspired to get into a scuffle in the hall, break his door down, and, in the melee, shoot him. Duke saddled his horse after dark and rode out for Escarbada, and that night the door was broken in.

At that time just "a kid of a boy" was attempting to live upon a claim across the line. As he had worked a little with the XIT outfits, Duke hired him in 1907 and 1908 to keep his eyes open and discover what he might about the New Mexico rustlers. When XIT cattle got through the fence, the New Mexico farmers around Endee would put them in a corral, and by the herd law of that state the ranch was forced to pay damages. Some of the farmers almost made a business of drifting cattle upon their land so that they might collect damages. This boy was to "ride sign" unobtrusively and discover the parties guilty of this fraud and of cattle theft. Suspecting the kid, Mart McCracken and another cowboy rode up to his dugout and told him they were going to kill him. His precocious belligerency surprised them. Opening fire he shot McCracken through the arm and ran both of them off, but that night he left the country and Duke never heard of him again. He feared to stay after the open break. Duke always paid him in currency, never by check, and though the boy worked

off and on for nearly a year, Duke never knew his name. The Escarbada was closed out as a breeding range in 1906, and the XIT began using it as a steer pasture. Then its troubles from mavericking became a thing of the past.<sup>28</sup>

In history, as in legend, the trails left by the mavericks are trails blazed with human blood. Scarcely less sanguine were those of the brand burners, though the extent to which brand burning was practiced has frequently been exaggerated. The ingenuity and skill necessary to its successful pursuit have flushed the already colorful stories of cattle theft. Fittingly, the most widely told legend of brand burning of the Southwest is of this brand of one of the world's largest ranches. Almost as far as the brand is known, cowboys tell the tale of the  Star Cross burn. Around their fires at night, or as they sit in the shade of a corral fence by day, someone will tell the story, and others, tracing the XIT in the sand between their bow-legs, will attempt to convert it into a Texas star with a cross in the center.

Uncertainty as to the rustler who performed this work of art is an attribute of each recital, but little doubt that it was done shakes the believer's faith. One old-time cow-puncher tells how the man who stole so heavily under this manorial coat of arms was brought to trial at Lubbock. The jury acquitted him upon the ground that the conversion of the XIT into a lone star was an impossibility. Once acquitted by Texas laws, a man is free from indictment upon the same charge. Knowing this, the rustler took a piece of paper, called the jury around him, and with the pride of a master craftsman in his work, proceeded to show that such was not an impossibility.

The Syndicate brand was made with one straight bar

<sup>28</sup> R. L. Duke to J. E. H., March 21, 1928.

about five inches long. By turning this bar in the relative position of the lines of the three letters, the entire brand was placed upon the animal with five applications of the iron. Haste in the work or the hide of a calf drawn a little from its natural position, often resulted in a brand not altogether symmetrical, and this legendary rustler searched until he found such a brand, **XIT**, and there were a great number among the thousands of Syndicate cattle. After roping and tying the animal he took his running iron or ring, and traced the lone star cross upon it in this way



Another old-timer recalls that a New Mexico rustler executed this burn.<sup>29</sup> However, the matter of geography is insignificant because wherever the vivid imagination of the story-teller may wander around the ranges of the **XIT**, there rides this mythical rustler with a running iron upon his saddle. Looking across the glowing remains of "coosie's" fire after the day's work is over, the cowboy, hearing this tale, gazes upon a moonlit plain where the pungent odor of burnt hair yet lingers. Somewhere a calf calls to its mother, and in the breeze a swaying trace chain tinkles against a wagon wheel. The half-dozing cowboy jerks himself to life, for in these sounds from across the prairies comes the muffled jingle of a rider's spurs, the "beller" of a calf in pain, and the unmistakable aroma of burning hair and hide. Settling back upon his heel he smiles to himself for a moment before hunting his "suggans." Thus, in retrospective moments this legendary horseman still rides through the ranges of cowboy imagination, still, with thundering hoofs, bursts from danger to live among the heroes of folklore.




<sup>29</sup> Harry Ingerton, as cited.

<sup>30</sup> A. L. Turner, as cited.



Simple enough was the origin of this widespread tale.

With reference to the burning of the XIT brand into a star cross [wrote Mr. George Findlay], I have to say that while this story was given circulation by several reputable publications, it is purely a myth and never occurred in fact. I was living on the ranch about the time, and the XIT being a new brand in that country, the cowboys used to amuse themselves around the camp-fire by showing how many different things it could be altered to, and I remember this star cross was one of them.<sup>31</sup>

Where legend is so prolific, there is usually a basis in fact, and more than one rustler burned out the XIT brand. In the Yellow House country it was burned into  (Boxed XITF) and  (Boxed XITE).<sup>32</sup> Again it was burned into  (eighty, barred out).<sup>33</sup> While the Escarbada and the country to the north were having trouble, out upon the Plains to the south a few rustlers kept their irons smooth.<sup>34</sup>

The little town of Dimmitt lapsed from excited partisanship to peaceful lethargy when election day was past until the Cordel band became overbearing. Two brothers, Fred and Oscar Cordel, left the more settled county of Palo Pinto to stretch their ropes upon the mavericks of Castro. About 1891 they filed upon a little ranch northeast of Dimmitt. Their herd soon "began to look a little off-color."<sup>35</sup> They associated with the toughest element and every cow thief that passed through the country stopped with them. Passers-by always saw a quarter of a beef hanging at their camp, but never a hide hanging over the fence to dry. Before Ira Aten was appointed sheriff of the county, the Cordels became so bold as to ride into town in broad day,

<sup>31</sup> George Findlay to J. E. H., December 3, 1926.

<sup>32</sup> R. C. Burns to J. E. H., February 22, 1927.

<sup>33</sup> S. A. Bull to J. E. H., July 6, 1927.





<sup>34</sup> A branding iron must be smooth, free from rust and scales, to give satisfaction.

<sup>35</sup> Ira Aten, as cited.

throw open corral gates, and drive the milk calves off. Good men were bull-dozed by such high-handed outlawry, and were afraid to oppose them. In 1893, soon after Aten became sheriff, the Cordels began moving their cattle to the Washita in Oklahoma, taking with them a number of cattle belonging to neighboring cowmen.

Aten and a JA cowboy trailed them to their ranch on the Washita. The Cordels were away, but Aten arrested Bob Burkett and a man named Thacker, two cowboys holding the cattle.

They were brought back to Texas [said Aten] with more than three hundred head of cattle belonging to people living in Castro, Randall, Swisher, and Armstrong Counties. The Cordel boys were indicted in almost every county they passed through from New Mexico to Oklahoma, it was my motto, "If we can not convict them; break them up in lawyer fees."

Back in Texas the thieves were apprehended at their ranch and tried at Tulia. With the shrewdness of their calling, the Cordels shifted the responsibility to their cowboys, who were sent to the penitentiary. The evidence in the case was made up of three head of cattle, mysteriously wearing new brands. An XIT steer had been burned into  (four, box P), a steer branded with C. C. Slaughter's  (Long Lazy S) wore an  (ace of clubs) and a JA (JA) animal was burned into  (DA connected).<sup>36</sup> Ira Aten broke up the Cordel band, though in spite of the many indictments brought against them, the leaders were not convicted.

Often brand burning was so skillfully done that the alteration could not be detected. Though the cowman could not succeed in bringing a thief to justice before regularly constituted courts, he matched his wits against the

<sup>36</sup> Ira Aten to J. E. H., March 1, 1928; B. P. Abbott to J. E. H., June 24, 1927.

most clever of rustlers, and in some way usually defeated him at the game.

Upon this XIT steer stolen by the Cordels, the X had either been applied carelessly, or in handling, the calf had been twisted around, so that the brander made almost a cross  $\times$ , instead of an X, and its burning was simple. Brands usually "hair over," but the hair ruffles to show the brand distinctly. A brand applied after the animal becomes old may fail to "hair over," but leave instead a whitish, calloused scar. In burning a brand, the rustler traces his iron over the entire old brand in order to give it the same freshly branded appearance as the new parts. In this instance the old brand left a scar, the newly branded portions "haired." The Four Box P was distinct when viewed at close range, but from a distance the XIT stood clear from the alteration. Thus a trick of nature proclaimed this steer a stolen one and the man holding him a thief.<sup>37</sup>

Nature did not often thus conspire to defeat the rustler. When unable by examining a brand to prove an animal burned, cowboys sometimes shot it down to be skinned. When viewed from the flesh side of the hide, the old brand shows more plainly than the new. As the hide begins to dry, the old brand stands out against the light more distinctly than the alteration and is incontestable evidence. A hide that has been dry for months may be soaked in water until pliable, held to the light, and the brand inspected in the same way with almost as unerring results.

Where the rustler killed a beef he usually destroyed or threw the hide in an out of the way place. He might go farther and cut the brand from the hide and the ear-marks off so that its possible discovery would leave the finder at loss as to the owner. A hide found with altered earmarks

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

or with the brand cut out showed that a thief had killed the animal.

The final episode in twenty-eight years of fighting for law was the only one in which an XIT cowboy was killed. After the Yellow Houses and Spring Lake were sold, the Bovina and Escarbada divisions were placed under one foreman, John Armstrong, who had succeeded Ira Aten. The nearby J J Ranch was under the management of Gene Ellison, an old friend of Armstrong. A J J cow had been burned into **JJ** (SHS connected). Ellison drove her to the Bovina Ranch where he and Armstrong killed and skinned her. Satisfying himself as to the original brand, Ellison swore out papers for the arrest of J. W. Williams. Williams claimed to have bought the cow, or at least he had a bill of sale, an old trick in rustling. He, in turn, swore out papers for Ellison and Armstrong for killing the cow. Bad blood was aroused, Armstrong and Williams met at the depot at Bovina, November 18, 1908; the latter opened fire with a 30-30 Winchester and shot Armstrong off his horse. A trial at Canyon resulted in a hung jury. At Amarillo a six-year sentence was returned, the case reversed, tried again, and nine years were given.<sup>38</sup>

The trial was typical of early day judicial proceedings. It had long been the practice for cattle rustlers to introduce the evidence of perjurers. The defense in this trial went down to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, to get a man as witness who was in jail at the time Armstrong was killed. He testified that he saw Armstrong rope Williams and drag him along the ground just before the shooting took place. Armstrong's horse was not caught until the next morning, but the rope was still done up on the saddle. The rope would have been dragging from the "horn" had the testimony

<sup>38</sup>J. P. McDonald, as cited.

been true.<sup>39</sup> A stretching rope has undone more than one rustler, but here one loosely coiled silently proved a man a perjurer.

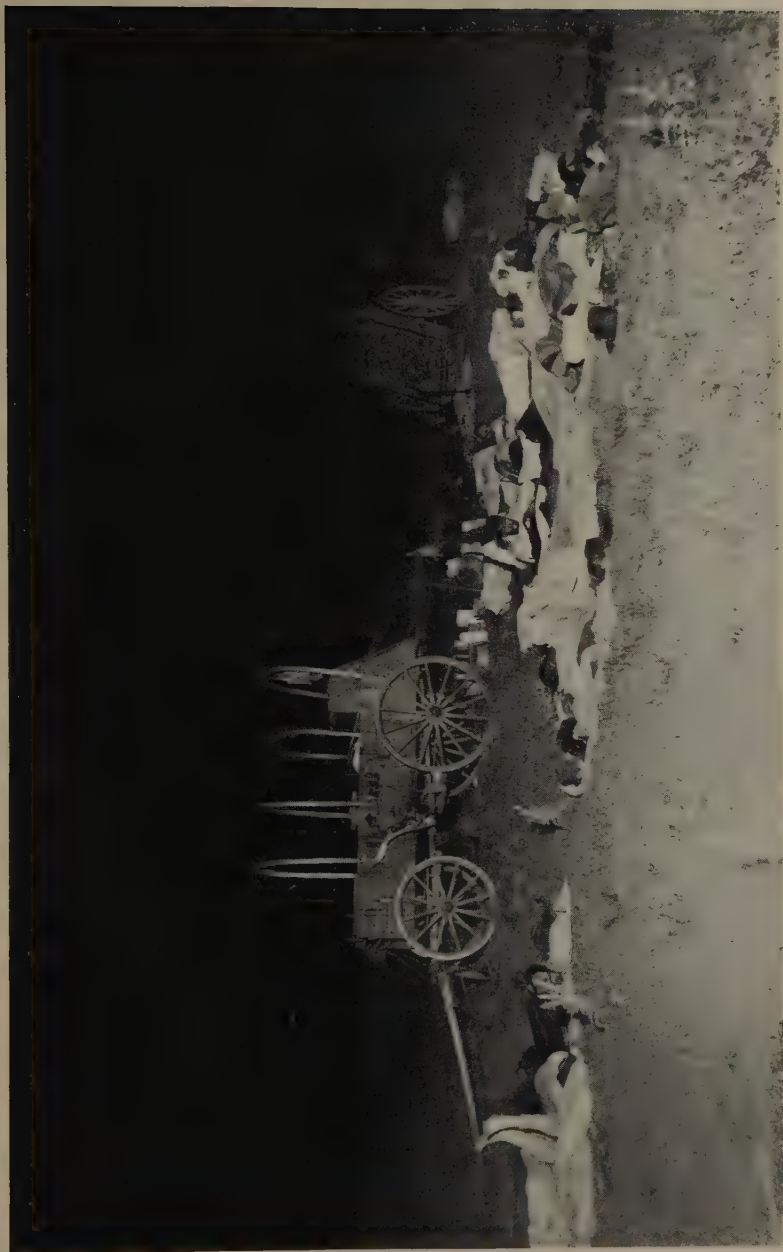
When the last cow was sold, when the last beef was tallied over to the buyers in 1912,<sup>40</sup> only then did the vigilance of the Syndicate cowboys against rustlers of XIT cattle come to an end. For more than a quarter of a century this institution, often represented by one hundred and fifty efficient, bow-legged, dust-begrimed riders of the Plains, fought for law and order. What the Panhandle Stock Association had meant to the eastern Panhandle, the XIT alone meant to the far western portion. From the time when Matlock and Boyce expelled practically the entire range force because of its lawless character, through the fights with organized thieves along the Canadian, over in New Mexico, and even along the eastern fence lines, from 1885 to 1912, the XIT Ranch was an institution of law. It did for the Western tier of Panhandle counties what county organization had failed to do.<sup>41</sup> It gave of its money, its men, and its time in a long fight for law.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> R. L. Duke to J. E. H., March 21, 1928.

<sup>41</sup> Charles Goodnight to J. E. H., September 2, 1927.





WHEREVER THE COWBOYS SPREAD THEIR "HOT ROLLS," THERE WAS HOME. (PICTURE OF THE YELLOW HOUSE WAGON  
AT NIGHT)

## NIT RANCH.

THE CAPITOL FREEHOLD LAND & INVESTMENT CO., LIMITED,  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.

Escarbado Fifth

Division

La. 5101

189.4

1608 J. L. S. &amp; J. L. L.

### Killed for Beef

Died

The small herd of cattle - very poor with the exception of the South West pasture - All the grass being burnt off of both side of said pasture & very Northern the cattle drift to the South end on the burnt ranges & have to be driven over to the grass. These cattle about 1200 in number are in very bad shape & are now working their way out of said pasture to the North pasture in the brush. The condition of the horses is very poor sheep where it was burnt & close around some of the working places in North pasture.

The condition of the Winter supply is *Good except a few places in the North pasture*

The condition of the Forces is Good except the North + part of the West fence of the North pasture. All of the fences that the fire burnt over will have to be repaired. Some extent

The condition of the Growing Crops on Farm is *No work on farm*

The work on Farm has consisted of

Yours truly,

e. de Ater

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, 110.

BY GLANCING AT THE MONTHLY REPORTS THE OWNERS COULD QUICKLY KNOW THE CONDITION OF CATTLE, RANGE, WATER—THE STATUS OF THE ENTIRE RANCH



## CHAPTER IX

### *The Montana Trail*

←—————→  
**D**ODGE CITY was closed to the trail drivers from Texas in 1885 when the quarantine line was extended to include that portion of southern Kansas,<sup>1</sup> and the great trail movement entered upon its declining decade. Thereafter, with the exception of a little driving to Kiowa and Liberal, Kansas, and to Trail City, Lamar, and other Colorado rail points, most of the herds trailed to northern ranges by a course that left Kansas to the east. This route was often called the Northern Trail,<sup>2</sup> and, more specifically, the name of the state or territory to which it led, as the Wyoming or Montana Trail.<sup>3</sup>

In 1886 fifteen thousand head of XIT steers were sold and trailed north. Divided into several herds, these first XIT steers skirted Kansas, passed through Colorado and on to Spearfish on the Little Missouri.<sup>4</sup> The total drive from Texas over the Northern Trail that year was estimated at 225,000 head.<sup>5</sup> It was common knowledge to the cow country that steers matured in the North grew to greater size, and the LS, Milliron, Matador, N-N, 7D, and the XIT were some of the Panhandle outfits that maintained

<sup>1</sup> Wright, *Dodge City, the Cowboy Capitol*, 260.

<sup>2</sup> *Bureau of Animal Industry Report*, 1885, p. 297.

<sup>3</sup> *Prose and Poetry of the Live Stock Industry*, I, 529.

<sup>4</sup> J. E. May to J. E. H., June 29, 1926.

<sup>5</sup> *The Tascosa Pioneer*, September 29, 1886.

breeding ranges in Texas and finishing ranges in the northern territories.<sup>6</sup>

Denver dispatches erroneously announced that the trail was closed in 1887,<sup>7</sup> but each year herds continued to take the northern trail. Six herds of XIT cattle, totalling 15,000 head, were sent to the Black Hills in 1889,<sup>8</sup> and the next year the Syndicate placed 10,000 head upon the trail, the first to go to its immense Montana range north of the Yellowstone.<sup>9</sup> George Findlay received the herds in Texas from A. G. Boyce, and delivered them to O. C. Cato, manager of the northern ranch.

This range lay north of the Yellowstone with the ranch headquarters about sixty miles from Miles City, the capital of the northern range country. From 20,000 to 30,000 steers were double-wintered on this range, then shipped as fine beef to Chicago. Trail herds totalling from 10,000 to 12,500 head annually replaced those shipped to market and made room for prospective arrivals on the Texas range.

Day and Driscoll had pastured cattle in South Dakota for the XIT two or three years before the Montana range was secured. Thereafter all Syndicate steers were sent north of the Yellowstone.<sup>10</sup>

As yearlings the steers were driven from the various divisions to Buffalo Springs and then taken to Montana as two-year-olds. No yearlings were driven north, but a few were shipped after the close of the trail.<sup>11</sup> Directions to the trail bosses, the men who drove these herds, were simple and brief. "Keep your eye on the north star" Boyce told them,

<sup>6</sup> J. E. May, as cited; G. N. Jowell to J. E. H., January 17, 1927; see *The Tascosa Pioneer*, August 13, 1887.

<sup>7</sup> *The Tascosa Pioneer*, July 30, 1887.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, May 9, 1889.

<sup>9</sup> H. W. Eubank, as cited; *The Tascosa Pioneer*, May 17, 1890. See the appendix for a description of the Montana Ranch.

<sup>10</sup> J. E. Moore to J. E. H., February 26, 1927.

<sup>11</sup> B. P. Abbott to J. E. H., June 24, 1927.

"and drive straight ahead until you can wet your feet in the waters of the Yellowstone."<sup>12</sup> Brief indeed for ten men with 2,500 steers setting forth on a twelve hundred mile drive, when troubles beset that drive from end to end.

No Man's Land, where law seldom reached, was a refuge for hard characters. Nothing disturbed the passage of the XIT herds until 1892, but in the spring of that year a tax was imposed on all trail herds that passed through the Strip. Before the herds were placed upon the trail Boyce and Findlay heard of the scheme.

Ab Owings, experienced in the ways of the trail and no apprentice in those of the world, was sent with the first herd. Ab was a big, long, freckled-faced Texan, a great story teller in the days when a story meant an anecdote of the soil, not waves of ether free from static. Off the trail he was downright "onery"; he was put to freighting and never passed through a gate without "hubbing" and tearing down a post. When riding fence, he forgot his pliers, rode and saw but repaired not. On the trail, he could forget more than most men knew and still be a better boss.<sup>13</sup>

We can imagine Ab throwing the herd off the bed ground in the early morning light, and, as the cattle stretched from the night's rest and moved off to the north, the pointers, those men who directed the herd along its course, moved up to where the lead cattle were stepping out, the swing men dropped into place behind them, the flankers pushed in the cattle along the outer edges, and the drag men behind pushed the stragglers off the bed ground. Meanwhile the cook's wagon was loaded and he moved ahead to prepare the noon-day meal. The sun warmed stiffened muscles and the cattle began to graze. A drag hand pushed them

<sup>12</sup> Forest Crissey, "The Vanishing Range," 4; J. E. Moore to J. E. H., February 26, 1927.

<sup>13</sup> J. E. Moore to J. E. H., February 26, 1927; B. P. Abbott to J. E. H., June 25, 1927; J. Frank Mitchell to J. E. H., June 10, 1927.



forward, and then Ab's voice boomed clear to the farthest pointer: "By God, let 'em graze. They'll walk as soon as they get dry." After filling with grass the cattle began to want water, threw up their heads and began to walk. The herd strung out, and Ab and the outfit trailed along with it, often riding for miles without having to turn a cow or sweat a horse.<sup>14</sup> In 1892 Ab led the way into No Man's Land, prepared to let the trail boss immediately behind know if he should be held up for the tax and warn him of any danger.

Some armed men, representing themselves as United States marshals, met Ab on the Cimarron, and when he refused to pay the tax, placed him and his herd under arrest. Ab sent a cowboy back to notify Boyce and Findlay. On his way the cowboy passed the second herd, driven by J. E. Moore, and told him that the first was being held.

When I got to Cold Springs two days . . . after leaving [J. E. Moore wrote], an officer, at least he called himself one, came to my herd and told me that they had Owings and his herd under arrest down on the Cimarron river and were going to hold him until they collected the tax and if I wouldn't try to pass on thru but would stay where I was they wouldn't put a man with me. . . . I had been instructed by Mr. Boyce not to try to pass the other herd in case it was held up. . . . I very readily promised to stay where I was . . . until they said for me to go. . . . Messrs. Boyce and Findlay came up and paid them by check, under protest, and we were allowed to pass on thru. . . . But the XITs together with other ranches who were driving herds North and had to pass thru No Man's Land . . . took this tax graft into Federal Court and finally beat it, so, by 1894 we could drive thru without being molested.

The tax totalled eight cents on each steer. A charge of five cents was made upon entering, and then, being in, the drivers paid three cents to get out. The very method pursued proclaimed the tax a fraud, which, had it been

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*



"HORSE WORK", ON DIVISION NO. 4. THE COOK MIXES HIS DOUGH UNDER THE "FLY" AT THE BACK END OF THE CHUCK WAGON. BEDS LIE AT THE RIGHT, AS HE HAS THROWN THEM FROM THE WAGON. JOHN V. FARWELL IS TO THE LEFT OF THE WAGON, GEORGE FINDLAY ON THE EXTREME RIGHT. THE HORSES ARE CONTENTED TO STAND IN THE ROPE CORRAL. FIRE SMOKES FROM UNDER THE POT-RACK AND SOON THE BOYS WILL BE IN FOR "CHUCK".



CATCHING HORSES FROM A ROPE CORRAL ON THE ALAMOCITOS. THIS PICTURE WAS MADE NEAR THE PICKET CORRAL IN 1898

collected upon the twelve thousand XIT cattle alone, would have netted these "officers" a convenient sum.<sup>15</sup>

Trail wagons were loaded with provisions and the necessary equipment at Channing, Texas. The first outfitting point along the trail was Lamar, Colorado, a shipping point on the Santa Fe Railroad. Brush was the next supply point, next Lusk, and next Miles City, just before the Montana range was reached.<sup>16</sup> The Company made arrangements with mercantile houses in these towns, and the cooks swung their four-mule teams in to secure bacon, flour, coffee, chewing tobacco, and other necessities of trail life. Then the bosses might draw needed money to pay for water or to bail out some cowboy who "celebrated" too boisterously the end of a long thirst. Such was not included in the legitimate budget of the XIT bosses, but it was an oft-recurring labor trouble on the old Texas or Northern Trail. These trail stores were a distinct advantage to the drivers. Supplementary camp equipage might be bought, and because of these the cook found it unnecessary to load so heavily at the beginning of the drive.<sup>17</sup>

Nesters had settled near the trail towns, built irrigation ditches, which the drivers paid to cross, and fenced the waterings, which the drivers paid to use.<sup>18</sup> Stretching for a hundred yards along the South Platte, where the trail crossed just below the town of Brush, Colorado, was a vacant strip of land. Doubtless it was vacant because it lay in the course of the trail, and thousands and thousands of hoofs beat down the soil during the summer months. Then two men, with keener inclinations of graft than moral scruples, came and built a fence across the land and charged

<sup>15</sup> J. E. Moore to J. E. H., November 12, 1925.

<sup>16</sup> J. E. Moore, Ms., "Diary of a Trail Trip to Montana, 1892," copy, Panhandle-Plains Historical Society.

<sup>17</sup> J. E. Moore to J. E. H., February 26, 1927.

<sup>18</sup> Moore, "Diary," as cited, 5.



a toll of five cents upon every animal driven over the trail. In 1884 J. E. May, driving for the LS, was forced to pay these grafters, but the next year May, driving the lead herd on the trail, struck a road that led to a bridge above the ford, refused to be turned back, and blazed a detour that broke the swindlers' game. As he trailed on toward the North Platte he met a man who told him that those holding the land had made a barrel of money the year before.<sup>19</sup>

Between the men who followed the plow and those who rode herd over the cattle from Texas no very cordial feeling ever existed. The nesters of western Kansas had plowed furrows around their farms and raised "old billy" if the drivers allowed their cattle to pass over these "fences." The Texas cowboys, extreme individualists, had decided ideas that they and their steers might go where they pleased, and their traditions of many years supported such views.

When a man rode up to a herd with a complaint, he could never find the boss. Perhaps he came to him at first, and inquired as to where he might find that responsible person. The boss pointed the aggrieved to some cowboy on the far side of the herd, who took more delight in tall tales than in veracity. When accosted as the boss, he disclaimed the honor and directed him around the herd to another.<sup>20</sup> But such pranks were never conducive of amity between men more or less estranged by a traditional animosity.

At times the cowboys indulged in more than pranks, as when Chris Gish, driving for the Syndicate in 1894, threw his herd into a small pasture near Sterling, Colorado, where a German was reserving some grass. Chris was obdurate to *deutsch* invective, and the pasture owner hurried to Sterling and recourse to law, and the entire outfit was placed under

<sup>19</sup>J. E. May, as cited.

<sup>20</sup>J. E. Moore to J. E. H., July 6, 1927.



arrest. John McCanless, or "Scandlous John," had to take charge and the Company paid the bill.<sup>21</sup>

Four XIT herds of 2500 each and two X herds, owned by the Reynolds Brothers of Albany, Texas, were camped within a few miles of one another along the trail near Bovina, Colorado. On the evening of May 30, 1892, a snowstorm struck and drifted them together. These, held in charge by riders night and day, were turned loose early in the morning to drift with the storm. The cowboys stood night guard in summer clothes. J. E. Moore held his herd until two o'clock in the morning before releasing it and leading his near-frozen cowboys to the wagon and their "suggans." Twenty-three of his steers, and several horses froze to death, while the boys with the X herds lost the horses they had ridden in the afternoon and evening, twenty-eight head.

At daylight the cowboys crawled from their beds into six or eight inches of snow, found their horses almost frozen, drove them about to warm them up, and secured corn for feed from a nearby farmer. The corn was shelled into tarps spread upon the snow. Breakfast over, the riders began gathering their cattle, throwing the six herds together to have a roundup of about 14,000 head, one much too large to work. It was separated into four herds, and the cattle that did not belong in one were cut and thrown into their original herd.<sup>22</sup> With remarks about the weather wholly uncomplimentary, and with numerous resolutions to quit cow-punching for the girls and the potential domestic troubles they had left behind them, the shivering cowboys again headed north behind their gaunt and shivering steers.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> J. E. Moore to J. E. H., February 26, 1927.

The Northern Trail was long. After loading their wagons, at Channing the trail bosses set out for Buffalo Springs where they received their herds. With fresh horses the herds swung out from Buffalo Springs across into No Man's Land, now the Panhandle of Oklahoma. They averaged twelve to fifteen miles a day. To the Corrumpa where the herds watered first was a good day's drive, and another of brisk trailing to the Carrizo. Another day upon the trail with good luck placed them on the Cimarron above the 101 Ranch. Heading a little west of north the drivers trailed by Carrizo Springs, Freeze Out, Butte, and Clay Creeks to cross the railroad near Lamar.

From Lamar the trail led up the Sandy to be joined by the more eastern one that came by Trail City, thence to Kit Carson, north up Wild Horse to the Republican. The next water was at Hell Springs, then at Walker Camp, after which a good two days' drive placed the herds on the Beaver, and two more on the South Platte. The trail followed down Horse Creek twenty-five miles and crossed the divide to the North Platte. Cattle swam it at the mouth of Rawhide, but the wagons crossed on the government bridge at Fort Laramie sixteen miles above. The outfits trailed by Lusk to replenish their chuck, struck Hat Creek at the store that bore that name, followed its course to the Old Woman, kept on to Lance Creek, and to Lodge Pole. Down the Buffalo they trailed to the Belle Fourche River, across to Cottonwood and down it to the Little Powder. A fifty-mile stretch intervened before they struck the Big Powder; thence to the Mizpah and to Pumpkin Creek. Down it they struck the Yellowstone. They crossed the river to follow its course northeast for sixty miles, then turned their herds loose on Cedar Creek to fatten on the

Montana grasses for two years before going to the slaughtering pens of Chicago.<sup>23</sup>

The Yellowstone was too swift to swim horse-back. The saddle horses, driven in ahead of the herd, swam across a short neck of water to a little island, and the cattle followed. From this island they plunged into the main current, treacherous because of an undertow, and swam for the opposite shore. A ferryman of three-score years deftly handled a canoe, battled the current and, if necessary, paddled alongside the lead cattle to keep them from swimming into a mill—a circle in which they became helplessly confused and floundered until drowned. After the herd was crossed the boatman came back for the cowboys and their saddles. One or two cowboys always crossed ahead of the herd, took their lariats, and roped a horse as the remuda came out, to use in catching mounts for the others. The herds crossed five or six miles above Miles City, and the chuck-wagons were ferried over at the town.<sup>24</sup>

Crossing the North Platte and the Yellowstone was never a matter without concern to the drivers. One little bobble with the herd and everything went wrong. If the sun shone in the eyes of the cattle, they had difficulty in seeing the opposite bank and would not swim. Once the herd balked, perhaps several days were required to put it across. J. E. Moore had trouble on the North Platte in 1892, and helped six herds to cross before his would take the water. Among these were an N-N herd, an X herd, and the XIT herds driven by Dan Cole and Chris Gish. In 1893 says Mr. Moore, "When Milt Whipple, who had the lead herd, got to the Yellowstone River, his cattle balked on

<sup>23</sup> Moore, "Diary," 8-9; see appendix for complete log.

<sup>24</sup> J. E. Moore to J. E. H., July 6, 1927.

him and wouldn't take the water and I brought my herd up the next day and put them in and while they were crossing Milt put his herd in with mine and we got about one thousand head of his across and he had to do that way with the next two herds before he could get all his cattle to take the water." Both the North Platte and the Yellowstone were brimming full and swam the cattle from bank to bank.<sup>25</sup> Swimming the Platte was all in the day's work. The owners paid the trail hands \$35 a month to work eighteen to twenty hours a day driving "dogies" to the North, and the troubles of swollen rivers were one cause for the high wages. More than one rider on the Northern Trail drowned in the waters of the Platte and Yellowstone, and many with tears streaking their dirty faces watched their horses go under.

The cowboys set out from the Texas range with most of their wardrobes upon their backs, and from the day they left Buffalo Springs until they reached Montana they were with the herd night and day, often pulling off nothing but their boots and hats to sleep, and with no change of clothes unless they stripped to bathe in the turgid Platte or Yellowstone. They bathed in the creeks and dried in the wind. They ate XIT beef for the first two weeks on the trail, but when that which they drove became tough, they borrowed from the ranchmen along the way with scant compunction. They told the time by the sun and stars and pointed more than one greenhorn, as unversed in astronomy as in the pranks of the range, to the north star and told him to call the next guard when it "went down." When stormy nights brought on stampedes amid snows and rains, cowboys on guard made sincere vows never to drive again. As they turned back down the trail from Montana, they sang:

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, November 12, 1925.

Oh, I am a Texas cowboy  
Far away from home,  
If ever I get back to Texas  
I never more will roam.

Montana is too cold for me  
And the winters are too long;  
Before the roundups do begin  
Our money is all gone.

All along the Yellowstone  
'Tis cold the year around;  
You will surely get consumption  
By sleeping on the ground.

Come all you Texas cowboys  
And warning take from me,  
And do not go to Montana  
To spend your money free.

But stay at home in Texas,  
Where work lasts the year around,  
And you'll never catch consumption  
By sleeping on the ground.

But the lotus was in their blood. When green spears of the buffalo grass pushed up through the old, when, as the wrangler drove them in of a morning, the horses pitched and kicked and ran and rubbed off their dead winter hair against the "snubbing" post in the center of the corral, when "coosie" scrubbed up his chuck box with soap and hot water, when saddle riggings were being looked over and new stake ropes bought, the lure of the open trail was upon them, and again they drove, and as they headed north they sang again, but to a different tune:

I am a Texas cowboy and I do ride the range;  
My trade is cinches and saddles and ropes and bridle reins;  
With Stetson hat and jingling spurs and leather up to the knees,  
Gray backs as big as chili beans and fighting like hell with fleas.



If I had a little stake, I soon would married be,  
But another week and I must go, the boss said so today.  
My girl must cheer up courage and choose some other one,  
For I am bound to follow the Lone Star Trail until my race is run.  
Ci yi yip yip yip pe ya.

Each trail outfit was usually made up of eight cowboys, the boss, the cook, and the horse wrangler. All supplies, pots, Dutch ovens, other cooking equipment, and rolls of bedding were carried in the chuck wagon. Trail hands were paid \$35 a month, ranch hands but \$25. Most of the trail hands were laid off when the herds reached Montana. Some began work for the beef outfit there, in which way Texas range methods passed over the trail to all the Great Plains cow country. Not wishing to secure work in the North, or unable to secure it, the cowboy might lay around the ranch a month or two, attend a shipment of cattle to Chicago, and secure a pass back to Texas. Enough men were retained to bring the wagons and combined remudas back down the trail. When five outfits were on the trail the teams from two wagons were turned into the remuda and these wagons were traileed behind two others. The fifth wagon was driven by the cook, who fed the outfit on the way back. Three months were required for the trip north and two back to Texas "empty."

Two kinds of horses were used on the trail, day horses and night horses. Good night horses were ridden only on night guard. In the evening the remuda was driven into a rope corral and all the cowboys caught and saddled their night horses. These were staked near the wagon with ropes about thirty feet long. On the trail the stake rope was not tied fast around the horse's neck but was looped over it in a slip noose. When called for his guard, the rider slipped the rope off without delay, dropped it to the ground, and



AT THE YELLOW HOUSE WAGON, AS ELSEWHERE, "COOSIE" WAS LORD OF HIS REALM. IN THE RIGHT-HAND BACKGROUND IS THE TWO-WHEELED CHIP WAGON, HALF FULL OF COW CHIPS FOR COOKING PURPOSES. JUST TO THE LEFT IS THE POT-RACK, WITH ITS COFFEE POT SWINGING, AND SKILLET PLACED ABOUT



LONG WINGS PROJECTED FROM THE CORRALS AND WERE AN AID WHEN A HERD WAS BEING CORRALLED

rode to the herd. With bridle by the head of his bed and his boots and hat laid for a pillow, the cowboy slept with most of his clothes on. Ely Moore always drove his stake so near his bed that his horse might graze within four or five feet. Thus he was never over sixty-five feet from his horse. If he heard the cattle stampede, he jumped out, pulled on his hat and boots, was on his horse and away in two minutes.<sup>26</sup>

During the first few days upon the trail four men stood guard, holding the cattle about two hundred yards from the wagon. Within a week the high grade cattle, rarely so bad to stampede as the Longhorns, were becoming "trail broke" and the number of men on guard had been reduced to two. Within two weeks the cattle were being held nearer the wagon, with the night horses staked on the opposite side, and four men were standing guard in relays one night, and the other four the next. Thus each man had unbroken rest every other night. After a month on the trail the cattle came up to the wagon, making it necessary for the cowboys to push them back before going to bed. At night, as well as during the day, certain steers were always in the same relative position in the herd.

Continual standing of guard for five or six months became monotonous, and when, coming back down the trail one time, Ely Moore left the outfit at the Belle Fourche and turned east to pick up some horses, the others threw the remuda into someone's little horse pasture to escape herd. Hearing the bells a few of the horses wore, the owner of the pasture came down during the night, rounded the remuda up, and refused to turn it over to the boys next day except upon the payment of twenty-five dollars. That was easy, and Milt Whipple gave a check signing the name

<sup>26</sup>J. E. Moore to J. E. H., July 6, 1927.

"A. Owings." Ab had traveled too many trails to be induced to pay it, and the matter fell back upon the Company for settlement.

Chuck for the Syndicate outfits was always above the average. The fare consisted of sour-dough biscuits, potatoes, beans, coffee, beef, dried fruits, and a small amount of canned goods.<sup>27</sup> Jim McLaren, trail boss and one time foreman of the Escarbada, bought ham, eggs and butter along the trail. His chuck compared with that of the average outfit's was what Delmonico's is to a hamburger stand. These delicacies were not allowed by the company, but Jim bought them at each opportunity and placed them on his account as potatoes.

Yet current upon the Plains is the story of Jim's fall. Old-timers tell that George Findlay met Jim after he delivered his herd and asked him how much it cost to feed an outfit. Jim's accounts had been submitted, unknown to him, and Mr. Findlay held the figures. He professed ignorance, and, upon being pressed for particulars, said that it would take, among other items, two and a half pounds of potatoes a day for each man. Mr. Findlay thumbed the leaves of his little note-book. Jim, they say, was soon looking for another job. Each cowboy, by his own figures, had eaten over twenty pounds of potatoes daily.<sup>28</sup>

The XIT and other outfits trailing to the North might have sent their herds by rail after 1887. Apparently, with the risks of the trail—stampedes, blizzards, swollen rivers—and the troubles incident to passing through a country rapidly filling with settlers and being criss-crossed by wire fences, there were advantages in shipping. But driving was

<sup>27</sup> Moore, "Diary," 3-6.

<sup>28</sup> B. P. Abbott to J. E. H., June 24, 1927.



cheaper than shipping, and cattle driven well—handled by such men as Dan Cole, Ab Owings, and J. E. Moore—reached the end of the trail in much better condition than when they were started. One year in which the XIT shipped to Wendover, Wyoming and trailed on from there, it cost almost as much to drive that far as it would have cost to drive from the ranges of Texas.<sup>29</sup> Railroad rates upon steers to Montana were about \$1.50 a head in 1892, but Moore drove that year a herd of 2500 head at an expense of \$1801.80, or at a cost of a fraction over seventy-two cents a head.<sup>30</sup> The cattlemen of Texas continued to follow the Long Trail after the railroads were built merely because it was good business.

Opposition of the Kansas settlers, expressed legislatively through the quarantine laws, finally closed the Kansas Trail. The difficulty of driving the Montana Trail without trouble increased in direct proportion with the settlement of the country. The coming of the nester, his control of the waterings, and his network of barbed wire fences finally closed the trail. But it will not be forgotten in American history, for it was the greatest and most spectacular pastoral institution of all time.

A few herds, among them 12,500 steers that bore the XIT brand, went over the trail in 1896,<sup>31</sup> and one stubbornly pushed north in 1897.<sup>32</sup> Driven by John McCanless, or "Scandlous John," it had difficulty in getting through. Then the Texas Trail became a matter of memory. Well-bred, aristocratic steers were these last, more toothsome

<sup>29</sup> J. E. May to J. E. H., June 29, 1926.

<sup>30</sup> Moore, "Diary," 8.

<sup>31</sup> J. G. K. McClure, Ms., "Among the Cowboys of Texas," 8.

<sup>32</sup> H. W. Eubank, as cited; J. E. Moore to J. E. H., July 6, 1927; G. N. Jowell as cited; John McCanless to J. E. H., March 21, 1928.

and civilized than the scrawny Longhorns that blazed the Long Trail, less mean, devilish, and interesting; as prosaic as standardization. But reminiscent of the days of the birth of the Trail were those of its close—stormy and full of trouble.



GATHERING THE BULLS AND THROWING THEM INTO THE BULL PASTURES WAS THE LAST WORK DONE WITH THE WAGON IN  
THE LATE FALL



A PERSONAL CHUCK WAGON IN THE ALL OUT-OF-DOORS WAS THE WIND-  
MILLER'S ONLY HOME



## CHAPTER X

### *When the Grass Began to Grow*

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**F**RESH life came to the cow country when the grass began to grow. The "spring roundup," or the "general work," as it was often called, began when the grass came in the spring. Herds took the Texas Trail beneath balmy skies to follow the green grass north upon the heels of retreating winter. The oldest cows cut awkward capers as their strength returned, and horses, putting on flesh after the rigors of winter, bucked and played as the wrangler drove them in to the corral. Thus the time of year in a cow camp was measured, not by calendar dates, but by the coming of grass. Exceedingly close to the soil lived these men of saddle leather. Always ready riders, they never plied a quirt more willingly nor patted a cowpony's neck more affectionately than when the range began to "green up."

Green grass came early or late, depending upon the early or late arrival of spring and upon the season's rains. Usually about the middle of May thin streaks of dust shimmered upward with the heat waves along the horizon, danced through the mirages across the Plains, and drew to a common focus at Tascosa. The jingling of silver over the bars brought the tinkling of glasses in answer, as thirsty cowboys from the Turkey Track, LX, L I T, T Anchor, 101, Cross L, LE, LS, and XIT outfits lined up to pay their respects to Old Scotch. Horses rubbed off winter hair against



the hitching racks. A dozen cooks cracked their whips over their four and six mule teams as they drove up to Howard and McMaster's or Rinehart's store for a two months' supply of chuck. Then as each finished his loading he rushed over to push his way through the earlier arrivals and "belly-up" to the Equity, or the Cattle Exchange Bar. After a while most of them managed to get their wagons out of town and camp a little above Tascosa. Hard by horse wranglers lolled in their saddles while their remudas grazed quietly. Then there was hilarious mixing of sour dough, frying of great beef steaks, and making of coffee. An occasional yell and the report of a sixshooter sounded from the direction of the town. The next day the outfits strung out up the river to begin the spring roundup in New Mexico. Back down the river they worked, half across the Panhandle of Texas and more, to meet the Lower Canadian Roundup. Each day these riders rounded up a range from ten to fifteen miles square, branded the cattle they gathered, rounded up the range immediately below the next day, and so until all the country along the Canadian had been "worked."<sup>1</sup> By fall the work was done. But this was before the days of wire.

After the country was fenced each outfit worked only its own range, aided by "stray," or "outside," men who came in with a mount of horses, but no chuck wagon of their own, and stayed until the work was done. They carried back their errant cattle that had strayed over into the pasture.

With a range as large as that covered by some of the old general roundups under fence, the XIT still faced the problem of substituting methods by which its cattle could be

<sup>1</sup> *The Tascosa Pioneer*, June 12, 1886; *Ibid.*, March 30, 1887; James East to J. E. H., February 22, 1928; Frank Irwin to J. E. H., September 24, 1927; Harry Ingerton to J. E. H., April 8, 1927. L. Gough, "Sketch of the XIT Ranch," 4.

handled rapidly and efficiently. The ranch stretched nearly two hundred miles from the north to the south lines and varied widely in topographical features. After taking charge in the summer of 1887, Boyce decided to cross-fence this range into a number of separate ranches.<sup>2</sup>

His system of organization called for seven divisions, each division to be under the direction of a foreman, who was in turn responsible to General Manager Boyce. Boyce was responsible to the owners. Each division was named and numbered. Beginning at the north end of the ranch and progressing south they were: (1) Buffalo Springs; (2) Middle Water; (3) Ojo Bravo (Bold Spring); (4) Rito Blanco (Little White River); (5) Escarbada (The Scraping); (6) Spring Lake; (7) Las Casas Amarillas, or The Yellow Houses.<sup>3</sup>

Because of the varying range conditions, some of these divisions were better adapted for beef than breeding purposes, and their use varied accordingly. Buffalo Springs was set aside for a steer ranch. All the steers raised upon the other divisions were trailed in to Buffalo Springs as yearlings. An excellent ranch, but lacking the protection of the Canadian country, this North Plains range helped to acclimatize the Texas cattle during the year they remained there, for the more rigorous winters they would spend after passing over the Northern Trail to Montana.

Middle Water division, besides being used for breeding purposes, was the "cut-back," or cull ranch. Undesirable cattle, such as off-colors and defective animals, were "cut out" from other divisions and thrown into the Middle Water, where they were left until ready for shipment. Ojo Bravo, with headquarters on a tributary creek of the

<sup>2</sup>J. E. Moore to J. E. H., February 26, 1927.

<sup>3</sup>J. E. Moore to J. E. H., November 8, 1927.

Canadian, the Agua Caballo, near the New Mexico line, was a breeding range. Rito Blanco was used in part as a beef ranch. Old, barren, and dry cows fattened upon the fine grama and when the grass came raced to its bog holes to escape the heel flies.

Here grazed the beeves until ready to be shipped to market. Besides the range adjacent to Rito Blanco Canyon north of the Canadian, this division included the Alamositos country to the south, where at first the general headquarters of the entire ranch was located. Farther south the Escarbada, Spring Lake, and Yellow Houses were strictly breeding ranges.<sup>4</sup>

Each division was cut into a number of pastures. The Buffalo Springs ranch of 470,000 acres, which in the late nineties grazed 35,000 steers, was divided into four large and five small pastures. The Yellow Houses division, which was at the same time ranging 20,000 Hereford cattle, was divided into five large and twelve small pastures. Forty-seven windmills, and a large number of surface tanks furnished water for its herds, and the range was cared for from the divisional headquarters and two line camps.<sup>5</sup>

In the fall of 1898 J. J. Hagerman was building what is now the Pecos Valley Branch of the Santa Fe. This line crossed the ranch in a southwesterly direction from Amarillo, and Hereford, Farwell, Texico, and other towns sprang up along the new trail of steel. About mid-way across the ranch a switch was put in and a little town started up. Cowmen shipped in cotton seed to be used for feed, and in unloading it a little was invariably spilled along the track. When the switch was put in the XIT had a

<sup>4</sup>J. E. Moore to J. E. H., February 26, 1927; R. L. Duke to J. E. H., July 6, 1927; H. W. Eubank as cited.

<sup>5</sup>L. Gough, "Sketch," as cited, 2-3; J. G. K. McClure, Ms., "Among the Cowboys of Texas," 16.

bunch of high grade Hereford bulls just arrived from Missouri. The right of way was unfenced and the bulls gathered at the switch to eat their fill of spilled cottonseed. Then lazily content they often lay down upon the track to chew their cud. When the train came by every bull held his ground with aristocratic mien. To avoid a wreck the engineer was forced to stop, while the brakeman climbed off with a prod pole and chased the bulls away.

The switch had not been named, and the conductor reported his shipments at the division point as so many cars to or from "Bull Town." However appropriate the name, it was too vulgar for railroad men, and upon their maps they wrote "Bovina." <sup>6</sup>Bovina became known for a short while as a New Mexico and West Texas cow town and was reputed to be the largest inland shipping point for cattle in the world.<sup>7</sup> Bovina became the headquarters of division number eight of the XIT Ranch. This division was formed, ten years after the other divisions were made, by cutting off land from Spring Lake.

Each division operated as a separate ranch. Every calf was branded with the XIT upon its side, the last numeral of the year upon its shoulder, and the number of the division upon its jaw. A cowboy, looking at an animal branded with a figure 3 upon the jaw and 4 upon the shoulder, knew immediately that it was from the Ojo Bravo division and that it was a calf in 1894. No particular attempt was made to keep each division's branding upon its own range, as the cattle were shifted about. But the advantage of the year brand lay in the fact that the age of every animal could thus be told at a glance. When the general manager ordered a number of cattle of a certain age gathered for sale, he

<sup>6</sup>B. P. Abbott to J. E. H., March, 1928.

<sup>7</sup>James D. Hamlin to J. E. H., September 22, 1927.

knew that the order would be carried out without a mistake.<sup>8</sup>

The foreman of each division made a monthly report to the general manager. The report included a statement of range conditions, the condition of the cattle, the number that had been branded, the number lost, weather reports, the number of men working, and the wages that were being paid. One copy of this statement was filed at the headquarters; the other was sent to the Chicago office, where it was tabulated. Then the foreman made an annual report, giving a digest of his monthly reports and summarizing the conditions of his ranch. All business affairs such as paying of accounts and wages and the purchase of supplies, were handled at the general headquarters.<sup>9</sup> Each foreman had his own wagons, horses, and camp equipment. He hired and "fired" his own men. When one became perverse and could not be "fired," Boyce showed up and sent him on his way.

Once a cowboy, discharged at Spring Lake, refused to leave. Boyce happened by on one of his periodical trips about the ranch and asked the foreman why he did not tell the puncher to saddle his horse and move on. The foreman replied that such an order would mean that one of them would be killed. Early next morning Boyce was at the breakfast table ahead of the cowboys with his sixshooter lying in his lap. When the cowboy entered Boyce said:

"This ranch is not big enough for both of us. Immediately after breakfast one of us is going to leave, and it's not going to be me." It was not.<sup>10</sup>

With such an organization each division worked independently of the other. No foreman was bound to wait upon another, but went about his own work.

<sup>8</sup> Ira Aten to J. E. H., February 27, 1928; Gough, "Sketch," as cited, 5.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*; Gough, "Sketch," as cited.

<sup>10</sup> B. P. Abbott to J. E. H., June 24, 1927.



Upon the southern divisions early grass enabled the wagons to start late in April or by the middle of May. The regular crew of ten or twelve cowboys upon a division like the Escarbada was then increased to twenty-five or thirty. Except for a few line riders, windmill hands and freighters, all of these men lived with the chuck wagon from the breaking of spring until the northers of December. Wherever they spread their hot rolls and stuffed their hats and boots under their heads for pillows; wherever the chuck wagon camped and the cook yelled "chuckaway," "chuck," or "Come and get it," there was home.

Bolted into the rear end of the wagon was the chuck box. The hinged "lid" or cover opened from the top and was supported horizontally by a single prop to form a table. Convenient drawers held tin plates, cups, and cutlery. Other drawers and shelves were stored with coffee, cans of sugar, salt, soda, molasses ("lick"), lard, and other articles of frequent demand. In the bed of the wagon the cook carried a large amount of flour, bacon, sugar, beans, dried fruit, some cases of canned goods, and a reserve supply of "lick." Here the beef was kept. A fresh beef was killed when needed, usually in the late afternoon, quartered and hung alongside the wagon or between the spokes of the wagon wheel. The cool night of the High Plains chilled the meat, and immediately the next morning it was wrapped in a tarp or in slickers and placed at the bottom of the wagon. Bed rolls were thrown in upon it to help shut out the noon day heat, and the meat would usually keep fresh for several days. Each night the operation was repeated, and usually by the third day the beef had been eaten and another was killed.<sup>11</sup>

Beneath the chuck box, attached to the bottom of the

<sup>11</sup> Gough, "Sketch," as cited, 9-10.

wagon bed, was another large box with a hinged door, in which "coosie" stored his pots, pans, and skillets while moving camp. Upon the side of the wagon stake ropes were carried for use in picketing "night horses." A keg of water was attached to one side; to the other, often a tool box. Usually grain for the teams was stored in the front end of the wagon beneath the spring seat. Camp was moved almost every day, sometimes twice daily. Breaking camp after a breakfast ready before daylight, the cook might drive ten or twelve miles and prepare dinner for the roundup to be at that point. Then he often had to make another move before camping for the night. Some cooks swung a beef hide under the wagon and in this *cuña* (cradle), as it was called, carried the wood the horse wrangler helped gather as they moved from one camp to another. Upon the Plains ranges where no timber grew, an extra, two-wheeled wagon was added to the camp equipment. It occupied a rather menial social position among camp equipment, and was politely known as the "chip wagon." Nevertheless it was essential to the preparation of the meals, as it held half a wagon load of cow chips, enough, with proper economy, to cook at least three meals.<sup>12</sup>

In the chuck box, or in the bed of the wagon, the cook carried a keg or large earthenware jar, streaked and bespattered with white. This held the sour dough for his biscuits. Tenderfeet are always astonished that an outfit with 100,000 cows should not have enough milk for drinking and cooking purposes. They always will be astonished. That is why they continue to be tenderfeet. Drawing from his supply of sour dough at each mealtime, the cook made biscuits which rose like hot rolls by their own yeast,

<sup>12</sup> C. F. Vincent to J. E. H., June 26, 1927; R. J. Frye to J. E. H., June 26, 1927; B. P. Abbott to J. E. H., June 24, 1927.

replenished his sour dough with water and flour, and returned the keg to the wagon. Besides hot biscuits baked in his "skillets," or Dutch ovens, he prepared beef, potatoes, beans, and often some dish from canned tomatoes or corn. "Lick" and stewed dried fruit, peaches, apples, or prunes, were the only desserts, unless the cook happened to be particularly good humored and cooked a cobbler of canned or dried fruit. The skillets and pots of food reposed by the fire, the coffee pot upon some coals. When "coosie" yelled "chuck" and squatted upon his heel in the shade of the wagon to rub the few remaining particles of sour dough from his hands, the cowboys made a rush to the chuck box for plates, cups, knives and forks, heaped their plates and drew back out of the way to sit upon the ground or upon rolls of bedding and eat their meal in comparative silence.

Lord of his realm in every case, the cook, if communicative, sat against a rear wheel and directed remarks upon cattle, the weather, or the general perversity of "horse rustlers," to the group as a whole. Few, if any, "paid him any mind." But next to those of the wagon boss, his wishes about the camp were respected, and even the boss was not beyond his jurisdiction. For a cowboy to leave the wagon with his bed not rolled when camp was to be broken that morning, constituted an almost unpardonable breach of cow camp etiquette. For anyone to ride his horse so near as to raise a cloud of dust to blow over the wagon while a meal was in preparation was nearly sufficient cause for murder, certainly for unrestrained profanity.

An ill-tempered cook would often ruin the morale of a cow camp. A good humored one who did his work well always improved it. If the cook became lost in passing through unknown country and night came on, he did not

worry but camped his wagon. He knew the cowpunchers would hunt him up. He could be independent, as he had all the "chuck"; they were dependent on him, as they had to eat. When Indian dangers became a thing of the past, trail bosses always kept their wagons ahead of the herd, not behind it, if they wanted to get efficient work from their cowboys.<sup>13</sup>

Each cowboy's bed was rolled in a tarp and secured with a double rope or with two straps. Usually it was made up of blankets and a few "suggans" or quilts. When rain or snow came the cowboy covered his head with the tarp, tucked it under around the sides of his bed, and was fairly secure from water. Sometimes two cowboys combined their "hot rolls" to make one bed. The act of dividing it was called "cutting the bed."<sup>14</sup>

Out around the remuda rode the horse wrangler, the "rustler," or the "horse pestler" as he was variously called. Usually his was considered the most menial position in cow work. Many tenderfeet received bitter initiation to the life of the cow camp by wrangling horses. The wranglers helped the cook gather wood and harness his team. His most important duty was to "loose herd" the remuda where the grass grew best until it was needed at the roundup grounds for a change of mounts, which was often three, and sometimes four, times daily.<sup>15</sup> Cowboys often rode one hundred miles a day over all manner of country, and such riding took much horse flesh.<sup>16</sup> In spite of its unpopularity with real cow-hands, the position of the horse wrangler was an important one.

At evening "night horses" were roped out. In the usual

<sup>13</sup> M. Huffman, as cited; Gough, "Sketch," as cited; C. F. Vincent to J. E. H., June 26, 1927.

<sup>14</sup> Gough, "Sketch," as cited, 10.

<sup>15</sup> Ira Aten, as cited.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

absence of corrals, the remuda was driven into a "rope corral" formed by three or four cowboys holding lariats between them to form an obtuse U. After the horses were inside the U, the opening was closed by a line of cowboys whose horses were to be caught, or by another rope. A trained cowpony would not break from this corral. Ropes were dropped after the horses were caught, and the remuda resumed grazing.

The night horses were staked out. A stake pin was driven into the ground and the horse tied to it. Though the rope might drag along the ground thirty-five feet between the pin and his neck, the rope-wise pony never became entangled in it. If a herd were being held, horses for all the cowboys who were to stand guard or "night herd" were caught and staked, otherwise only those horses to be used by the cowboys who happened to be on "horse guard" were caught. Each night the remuda was herded so as to be ready for the start on the next day's "drive" as soon as breakfast was over. Night horses were for night use only. A cowboy looked for a quiet "clear footed" horse, of good eyesight, to reduce the danger of falling while running with a stamper, and for a horse that could find his way back to the wagon on the darkest night. Many night guards have been ridden by dozing cowboys, who, nodding the hours through, sat in the saddle upon a horse that needed no touch of bridle rein but jogged the circle around the herd with faithful regularity, and put back every cow that attempted to escape from it. Good night horses, along with "cutting" and "roping" horses, were prized beyond price and genuinely loved by the men who rode them. A little buckskin mustang called "Dunnie," that stirred the dust along the thousand mile Montana Trail for several seasons, never placed his foot over a stake rope in all that time.



Night LS, carrying Yellow House cowboys upon many night herds, never failed to find the wagon when the guard expired, and even walked to the end of his stake rope, dropped where the rider first mounted, when it was so dark the cowboy himself could not see it. Good "cutting" horses were the talk and the darlings of the cattle world. Davis Roan died under the saddle while cutting a cow at a Yellow House roundup. Whiskey, Cheyenne, Old Nig, and Sorrel were fast and faithful horses in a herd.

A spirited, four-footed phantom host impatiently stamps at the hitching racks of the past, pricking up their ears as cowboy voices echo from dusty corrals calling Midnight Alice, Jake Kilrain, Vinegarron, Sam Bass, King James, Bill Nye, Leatherlip, Governor Hogg, Knot-Belly, Milk Shake, and many another name.<sup>17</sup> The dust from their hoofs long since "mingled with the dust of the stars," but to ageing riders memories of such horses spring afresh with the first grass of every spring.

Gathering the yearling steers and trailing them from all the breeding divisions to Buffalo Springs was the first work after the wagon started. When a foreman delivered his steers to the foreman there, he received a receipt for them as though they had been sold. While the steers were being gathered only the big maverick calves were branded. This was to safeguard them from the rustler. Back from Buffalo Springs and the delivery of the steers by the middle of June, the division outfits usually began branding immediately. Day after day through late June, hot July, and into August, the work went on. Seven days a week these cowboys rode hard, rounding up, "cutting," roping and branding calves.

Breakfast just over, they were in the saddle and by day-

<sup>17</sup>R. J. Frye to J. E. H., June 26, 1927; B. P. Abbott to J. E. H., June 24, 1927; Ms., S. K. Bynum, Panhandle-Plains Historical Society; C. F. Vincent, as cited; Gough, "Sketch," as cited; McClure, as cited.

light were often miles away. Sometimes the entire group rode together for ten or fifteen miles. Pulling up his horse, the wagon boss checked the cavalcade and "told off his men," or scattered his riders. Two who rode good horses and who knew the country were designated "lead drive men." One of them might be the wagon boss himself. As some of "the drives" demanded harder riding than others, the boss usually "told off" his men with respect to their ability and freshness. As each designated man dropped out he was expected to start up and move towards the roundup grounds all the cattle between him and the two riders immediately on either side of him. The intervals between riders varied with the topography of the range, but on the Plains one cowboy often worked back and forth across a strip of country two to four miles wide. The lead drive man went on, generally riding much farther than the others, for he had to complete the circle and "head" those cattle on the farthest edges of the "drive" into the roundup, which were to be there at the same time the others arrived. The cowboys were thus on "the drive," or "out on circle," and as "the drive" came in the roundup was thrown together. Spreading in a great fan or circle, the cowboys often rounded up in one day as much as a hundred and fifty square miles of country.

After the drive was in, the cowboys changed mounts, began "working the roundup," cutting out the strays and "dry stuff," and then they began branding. Sometimes they "range branded." Instead of throwing the roundup into a corral they held it under herd on the range while cowboys roped and dragged the calves out thirty or forty steps from the herd to a branding fire. A cowboy on foot near this fire "went down the rope" to meet the jumping and bawling calf as the roper dragged him up. He might bull-dog it if it

were a very large calf. (Bull-dogging a calf consists of catching an ear in one hand, slipping the other hand down to catch the nose or the mouth and twisting its head until it flops over.) Usually he "flanked" the calf. Catching with his left hand the rope just against the calf's neck, or the ear on the side opposite him, he slapped his hand into the flank on the corresponding side. By a jerk upward and a pressure of the knees against the calf's side when it made its next jump, the cowboy sent the calf's feet outward and it came down upon its side. The cowboy, who was often called a "flanker" in this capacity, slipped the rope from over its head and the roper went back after another calf. "Flankers" worked in pairs. The man not flanking the calf grabbed the upper hind leg after it was thrown, sat upon the ground behind it, pulled back upon the leg and forced the under leg forward by pushing against it with his boot heel. The first cowboy held the fore leg on the side of the calf uppermost, and propped his knee upon its neck. Thus the calf was unable to kick or escape while being branded, cut, and marked. The operation over, it was released and allowed to scamper back to the herd and maternal consolation. Most of the ranch branding was done in corrals, as this made available for other uses the cowboys required to hold the herd while in the open.

If the morning drive was a short one and yielded only from two to three hundred calves, these were branded out, another drive was made early in the afternoon, and the calves were branded before night. Sometimes five hundred head were branded during the day. If as many as three hundred and fifty were brought in on the morning drive, another was not made that day.<sup>18</sup> Moving from one part of the range to another each day, the outfit continued

<sup>18</sup> Ira Aten, as cited; C. R. Smith, as cited; J. P. McDonald as cited.

branding until the entire range was "worked." One division might begin work before the others. But before it was through, all would be branding. The branding took about two months upon a ranch like the Escarbada.<sup>19</sup>

When branding was done, cow work was dropped for two weeks or a month. All the cowboys were retained and kept at lighter work, often loathsome to them, such as riding and repairing fences, and cutting hay from the natural meadows in the dry lake bottoms or the valleys of the "draws."<sup>20</sup> September came and the cooks replenished their supplies of grub to go upon the beef work.

Toward the first of the month the outfits were again upon the range with horses fresh from their rest, their "set-fasts" haired over and backs sound. From 500 to 1000 beef cows were gathered on each division from among the old, off-color, and dry cows. All the heifers were retained upon the ranch, but the steers were sent to Montana to be fattened. If an off-colored cow had a calf, she was kept upon the range. Then if she had no calf the next year and became fat, she was thrown into the beef herd and shipped. This culling out of undesirable colors and defective animals, together with the use of high grade bulls meant a very rapid improvement in the quality of the herd.

The fall branding, which was very light, was done while the beef herds were being gathered and was made up only of those calves missed during the summer. The fall roundups were conducted in the same way as were the spring roundups except that the beef cows were cut into a separate herd called the "cut." This "cut" was not released, but was herded by the cowboys night and day, and finally put upon the trail to Channing. There, about the first of October, the

<sup>19</sup> Ira Aten, as cited.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, J. W. Stevens to J. E. H., November 24, 1927.

cows were shipped to Kansas City or Chicago. Some cows desired for shipment were not fat enough in September, and about the first of November another beef herd was gathered, into which were thrown the old bulls no longer wanted upon the range.

After delivering the second beef herd late in November, each outfit trailed back to its division. The cowboys who wished to be home for the Christmas holidays were allowed to go. Six or seven were kept with the wagon to help gather the bulls. Instead of rounding up for this the cowboys just rode through the range drifting the bulls out before them. The wagon continued its itinerary, and every two or three days a few cowboys were sent to the bull pasture with the animals that had been gathered. This pasture had been reserved during the spring and summer so that the grass would be good. Furthermore it was chosen for the protection it would afford during the winter. Upon the range, bulls have a tendency to bunch up in the fall, and this made the task of gathering an easy one. Old bulls, accustomed to being segregated, would sometimes be found "walking the fence" of the bull pasture, and it was necessary only to open the gate to get them inside. All the bulls were gathered by Christmas and from then until the first of June, they grazed free from the disconcerting combats femininity is wont to engender. However desirable this peace and tranquility may have been, it was not for the bull's sake that he was segregated, but to insure a uniform calf crop during the spring and early summer months. Uniform calf crops meant better prices, fewer winter losses in both cows and calves, and fewer opportunities for the rustlers to pick up mavericks.<sup>21</sup> No calves were wanted until the grass

<sup>21</sup> Ira Aten, as cited; M. Huffman, as cited.





A PRAIRIE FIRE JUST AS IT IS GOING OFF THE PLAINS INTO THE BREAKS. THE HORSES STANDING ALONGSIDE THE BURNED PORTIONS BELONG TO THE COWBOYS IN THE DISTANCE WHO ARE FIGHTING THE ADVANCING FIRE

# XIT RANCH.

Meteorological Record at <i>Ft. H</i>					Division, Month ending <i>Jan 21<sup>st</sup></i> 1893	GENERAL REMARKS.
DATE.	THERMOMETER AT 5 A. M. & 5 P. M.		BAROMETER AT 5 P. M.			
<i>Jan</i> 1	30	43	28	$\frac{13}{10}$		The 44 colors reported died mostly from a disease supposed to be the blight by & most of them decomposed that their sex could not be ascertained.
" 2	10	41	29	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 3	30	50	28	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 4	19	56	28	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 5	41	57	28	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 6	21	52	28	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 7	33	30	29	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 8	8	33	29	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 9	17	32	28	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 10	34	38	29	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 11	86	42	29	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 12	32	45	28	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 13	20	43	28	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 14	21	42	28	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 15	29	40	28	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 16	22	43	28	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 17	29	43	28	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 18	30	50	28	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 19	38	64	28	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 20	43	45	29	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 21	19	47	29	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 22	22	43	28	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 23	27	47	28	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 24	26	50	28	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 25	17	22	28	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 26	5	38	28	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 27	12	3	28	$\frac{13}{10}$		4 inches of snow
" 28	8	12	28	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 29	3 below	16 above	28	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 30	3 above	15	29	$\frac{13}{10}$		
" 31	8	13	28	$\frac{13}{10}$		1 inch of snow
Total Rainfall,					Yours truly	<i>W. H. Hutton</i>

OVER A STRETCH OF PLAINS LAND TWO HUNDRED MILES FROM NORTH TO SOUTH, THE XIT KEPT MONTHLY WEATHER OBSERVATIONS. THESE, WITH CROP EXPERIMENTS, REPRESENT A VAST, SCIENTIFIC AGRICULTURAL WORK

had started in April and the cows had become strong and had begun "to put on tallow."

When the last bull trailed through the gate into the pasture set aside for him, the chuck wagon drew into headquarters after more than eight months out in the weather. The remnant of cowboys on hand then usually took a week "off," and went to the nearest town. Often over-painted, they indulged, as many other men of lonely, trying, outdoor lives, in the attractions of cards, drink, and dance hall, yet many cowboys indulged in none of these attractions.

Generous to a fault, the cowboy added life, happiness, and good-will wherever his pony's hoof-beats rang upon the crisp morning air. Many a child who had never known more homely comforts than a dugout offered, listening expectantly for the tinkle of Santa's bells, heard instead the jingle of cowboy spurs. And when the cowboy had ridden on into the white night those children nestled down into their blankets upon a bunk of boards and still believed in Santa Claus.

What rich traditions of generosity and high-hearted living mingle with the dust of forgotten cowboy trails! Memory rides them afresh when the grass comes in the spring.



## CHAPTER XI

### *Bog Camps, Lobos, and Prairie Fires*

WITH the first heavy frosts of fall the last hints of green gave way to gold, russet, and yellow. Cured into good, substantial forage, dry grass sustained the cattle until spring rains brought it to life again. The chuck wagon stood idle at headquarters, the remuda enjoyed quiet days in the horse pasture, and the "regular" cowboys were "holed up" in winter camps. In keeping with nature's season, work on the range was least active when the grass had turned brown.

Where but two line camps were necessary upon such a division as the Escarbada during the summer, five were kept up during the winter and spring.<sup>1</sup> To describe the camp men as being "holed up" is true but in part. The worse the weather became, the more they had to ride. Then drifting cattle had to be thrown back from the Plains into the breaks, and weak cattle demanded closer attention. Then the waterings froze over, and the cowboy chopped ice so his charges might drink. His work was easiest when the weather was balmiest.

Two cowboys were given a wagon, camp equipment, and saddle horses about the first of January and put to "wolfing" upon those divisions where lobos were most numerous. They were paid no salary from then until the cow work

<sup>1</sup>Tombstone and Trujillo were year-around camps. Tierra Blanca, Salt Well, and Toro were winter camps.

started in April or May. A bounty of five or ten dollars was paid upon every lobo caught, and some counties paid an additional ten. With good fortune the "wolfers" made more money during these few months than they did during all the rest of the year as cowpunchers.<sup>2</sup>

Lobos, the large prairie wolves, were the most predatory animals of the Plains. They were about the size of a Newfoundland dog, very cunning, and difficult to trap. The principal ways of killing them were by running them down horseback and by finding their dens. Cowmen estimate the annual depredations of a lobo at seventy-five cattle. The wily fellows preferred fresh meat, rarely returning to a carcass, which made poisoning impossible.<sup>3</sup> Several banding together rounded up a small bunch of cattle, and choosing a weak cow or steer, ran at its hind legs every time it came to the outer edge of the bunch. When they had cut its hamstrings and disabled it, the killing was easy.<sup>4</sup> Big calves and yearlings were common prey, and losses amounted to thousands of dollars annually.

The lobos took shelter along the cap-rock and in the breaks. At night they ventured out upon the Plains for several miles in search of meat. Very early of a morning the two "wolfers" saddled their horses and rode along the edge of the Plains just above the cap-rock. Thus they cut off any late returning lobo as he lazily trotted back to the shelter of the broken country. Turning him back across the level plain, they gave chase. Filled to the utmost with meat, the wolf could run but poorly, and after a chase of from two to four miles the "wolfers" were usually able to ride upon and shoot or rope him.

In March the lobo pups began to arrive. Then a she wolf,

<sup>2</sup> Ira Aten, as cited.

<sup>3</sup> Gough, "Sketch," as cited, 6.

<sup>4</sup> McClure, "Among the Cowboys of Texas," 21; R. J. Frye, as cited.



jumped by hunters or dogs, went to her den in all haste. The cowboy took a pack of hounds to use in trailing, and in locating these dens.<sup>5</sup> When he arrived at the cave, he took a short candle in one hand, his sixshooter in the other, wriggled into the den, and shot the wolf by the reflection of the light in her eyes. Rarely did he have to crawl inside more than ten or twelve feet, though sometimes farther. The dens were often so narrow that he could get in only by keeping both arms extended ahead of him. The explosion from his gun always put out his candle. He backed out of the hole to re-light it and went in again before he could be sure of the effect of his shot.<sup>6</sup>

Charlie Orr and Frank Fuller were "wolfing" one spring on the Escarbada. A question of propriety as to who should go first led to a delay at the entrance to a lobo's den. Being men of sporting blood, they settled the argument by drawing straws. Orr drew the long straw and had to go in. With sixshooter in hand he crawled until he could see the wolf's eyes gleaming at him. Up came the sixshooter and the roar shook dust from the walls and dinned in the cowboy's ears. The shot missed, and the lobo, seeing a gleam of light over Orr's back, made a break for the outside. The space was not enough for her to pass through and she wedged over Orr's back. Frantic with fear she began scratching away in an attempt to dig out, and every scratch carried away some of the cowboy's clothes. Finally she dug through and Fuller shot her as she came out. Nine pups were found in the den, but Orr's back was bare and showed marks of the powerful claws.<sup>7</sup> This mattered little, as a cowboy's back was tough and work shirts were cheap.

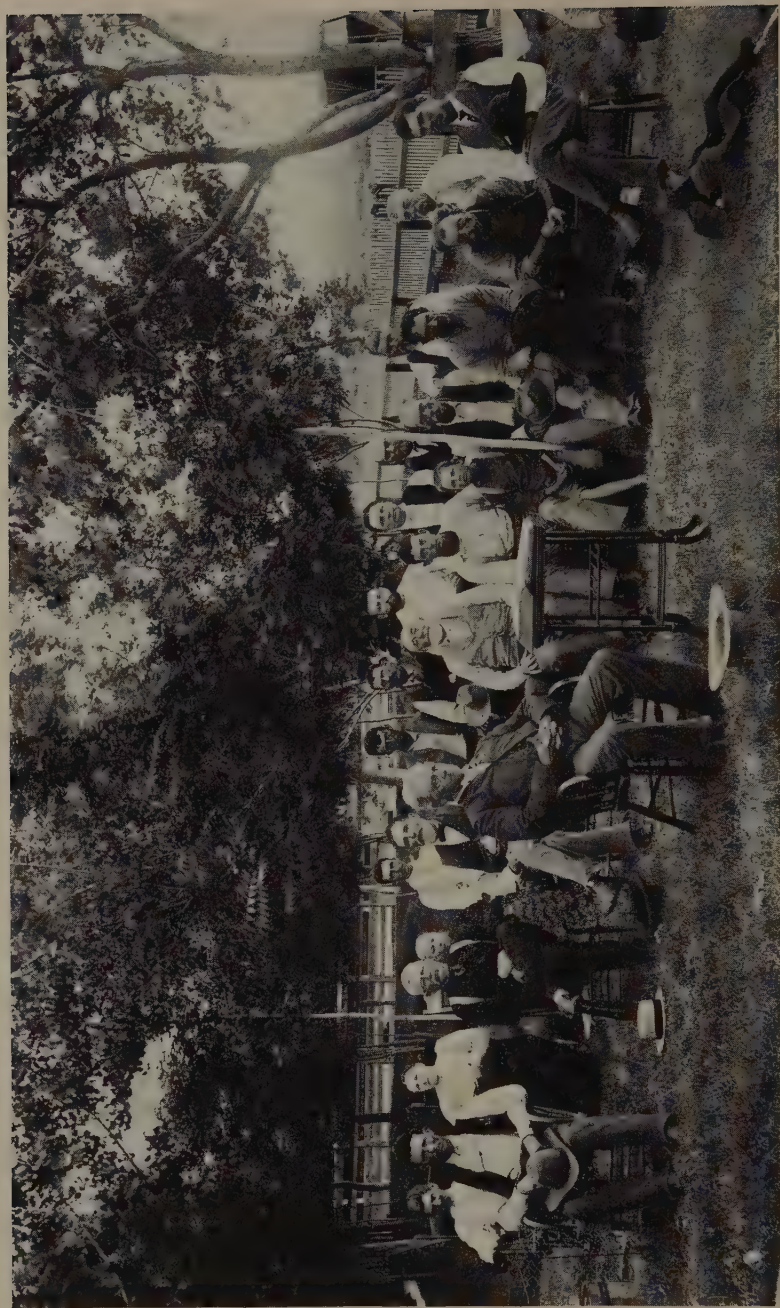
A lobo disturbed at its den leaves at the first opportunity

<sup>5</sup> Ira Aten, as cited.

<sup>6</sup> Allen Stagg to J. E. H., June 29, 1926.

<sup>7</sup> Ira Aten, as cited.





JOHN V. FARWELL, SR., AT SPRING LAKE HOLDING SUNDAY MORNING SERVICES FOR THE COWBOYS

and does not come back. To leave a den meant to lose the wolf. Dumas Hall, an eighteen-year-old boy keeping camp at Toro in 1906, crawled into a lobo's den, and, while feeling around in the dark, was bitten through the hand by the old one. With his lariat and skinning knife in hand he went into the den again. When he came to a narrow place, through which he could barely squeeze, he thought he heard his horse running away. Stopping to listen to the rhythmic beat of his hoofs, he heard instead the pounding of his own heart. Squeezing through the narrow place he crawled on. By striking ahead of him with his knife he crowded the wolf into a small hole, tied his lariat around her hind legs, pulled her out, and killed her with rocks. He went back and got ten pups from the hole, one of the largest litters found upon the ranch.<sup>8</sup>

Allen Stagg, XIT cowboy well versed in lobo lore, hunted along the Canadian for several seasons. He killed eighty-four lobos in 1896 alone, and upon one or two occasions was wedged into their dens in narrow places. After killing the old lobo he fished the pups out of the den by means of a long pole to which was attached a metal hook.<sup>9</sup>

Lobos when not gorged were swift. Few horses could equal their speed for the first four or five miles. The rider, undertaking to catch one, held his horse down to a "long lope." When the wolf began to tire he let out his horse a little, and after a long chase, often of ten or fifteen miles, he was able to ride upon and rope the animal.<sup>10</sup> J. Walling, one of the camp men on the Yellow House, once ran a lobo twenty-five miles. He got the wolf but "just the same as killed the horse," incapacitating him for further use.

<sup>8</sup>J. P. McDonald, as cited.

<sup>9</sup>Allen Stagg, as cited.

<sup>10</sup>Gough, "Sketch," as cited, 6.



Walling could have saved his horse if he had known how to run a lobo.<sup>11</sup>

During the late nineties, the Company paid annual bounties upon approximately 200 lobos, and its cowboys did much to clear the Plains of this predatory animal. So well did they do their work that rarely is one found today.<sup>12</sup>

Toward the first of March heel fly time came, and the cowboys began "riding bog." Heel flies are to cattle as mosquitoes are to bald heads. Attacked by a heel fly, the sedate old cow set forth at full speed toward the nearest mud or water hole. She splattered into a miry spot with complete abandon of her usual discretion, intent only upon escaping the winged terror at her heels. To adequately watch these boggy spots, line men were placed in special camps called "bog camps."<sup>13</sup> The Canadian is very boggy, and during the spring many cows were caught in its quicksands. There was a bog camp at intervals of every twenty or twenty-five miles. Four men in each camp rode in pairs, two up the stream to meet the cowboys from the camp above and two down the river to a point halfway between their camp and the next below. When they turned to "back-trail" to their camp in the late afternoon, all cattle along the river were to be headed from, not toward, the water. For every cow to have her head away from the river meant that she had watered and would not return, get into the bog that evening, and spend the night there. There was danger of losing a weak cow that stayed in the water and mud the night through.<sup>14</sup>

When an animal was found in a bog one of the cowboys pitched his rope around her neck and dragged her out by

<sup>11</sup> H. K. Baughn to J. E. H., June 25, 1927.

<sup>12</sup> Gough, "Sketch," as cited, 6.

<sup>13</sup> Ira Aten, as cited.

<sup>14</sup> S. K. Bynum to J. E. H., November 5, 1927.



the horn of his saddle. If the bog was so extensive that he could not get his horse near enough for this, he might lengthen his rope by tying another to it. Quicksands of the Canadian, however shallow, packed around the legs and sides of a mired animal, and held it so tightly that it could not move. The cowboys scratched or shoveled the sand from around the animal. When the sand was loosened the water rose through it. Then the animal was pulled out by the neck, as to pull one by the horns would sometimes break the neck. From day to day until the "spring work" started, or until rain came and raised the water level above the boggy places, these line men rode in the wake of the vicious heel fly, pulling bogs and cursing this little insect that caused so much trouble. Cattle became strong enough to pull out of the bogs and these camps were abandoned for another year when grass came in the spring.<sup>15</sup>

Many other phases of ranch work demanded the attention of the foreman and cowboys. Line riders watched for needed repairs along 1500 miles of fence. Much work was necessary to keep it in repair, and many camp men "rode fence" with nippers and a boot-leg of staples upon their saddles. Each division kept one or two "windmillers," whose only duty was the care of the mills. These "windmillers" lived upon a never-ending journey that carried them in a circle from one mill to another. They lived in the open the year around. A personal chuck wagon supplied with tools was their only home. They camped where night overtook them as they moved from mill to mill, repairing where attention was needed, passing on where it was not. About once a month they swung in by headquarters, replenished their store of provisions, repaired their tools, and reported to the foreman any neglect in greasing the mills on

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, Ira Aten, as cited.

the part of the line riders. Then they were off again in summer heat or winter blizzard.<sup>16</sup> One "windmiller" in Castro County always had to come in to help hold the elections. There were only five men in his precinct, and he was forced to serve as one of the election judges.

Lamb and Bailey Counties were attached to Castro for judicial purposes before they were organized. During the election of 1896 a box was held at Spring Lake. The boys from the Yellow House, the S ranch, the Spade ranch, and two "windmillers" and a cowboy from Red Tower came there to vote. Harry Baughn, foreman at the Yellow House, was presiding officer. Other cowboys and a "windmiller" were judges. When the polls were closed at 6:00 o'clock, the five judges began counting the votes. Only twenty-one had been cast, but the cowboys worked from then until five o'clock the next morning before all the votes were counted and the results announced.<sup>17</sup>

Many interesting experiments marked and marred the evolution of this pastoral institution. At the Yellow House the tallest windmill tower in the world lifted its wheel one hundred and thirty feet above the canyon's floor to catch the wind sweeping across the Plains and raise the water from a bare forty-foot level.<sup>18</sup>

Some of the XIT men in 1885 discovered a coal lode in New Mexico. The Capitol Company bought the mineral right from the government, and by November of 1886, over two hundred tons of coal had been mined from it, mainly for use upon the ranch.<sup>19</sup>

Barbed wire held first place among fencing materials until D. H. Wilson, president of the United States Electric

<sup>16</sup> Ira Aten, as cited; B. P. Abbott, as cited.

<sup>17</sup> B. P. Abbott to J. E. H., June 24, 1927.

<sup>18</sup> *The Sudan News* (Texas), July, 1926, p. 19.

<sup>19</sup> John V. Farwell, *Report* of 1886, p. 7.

Fence Company, appeared in Tascosa early in 1888 direct from Chicago.<sup>20</sup> He was armed with a Pinkerton detective commission, two sixshooters, and numerous affidavits as to the success of the electric fence he had invented. With the typical assurance of a tenderfoot he expected to "revolutionize" fencing and "supplant . . . barbed wire." To prove the effectiveness of this fence he contracted with the XIT Ranch to fence a pasture and construct a telephone line to the Alamocitos. The phone line was to be thirty miles long.

An "overshot" wheel at Alamocitos furnished water power for a generator. The electricity thus supplied was to be used in charging the second and top wires of a four-wire fence. The editor of *The Tascosa Pioneer* was enthusiastic over the innovation.

The electricity in these two upper wires is what gives them virtue as a fence [he wrote]. Stock touches them, and the shock is more effective and less injurious than the snagging by deadly barbs. . . . Many posts are dispensed with, fifty feet being easily sufficient between any two with this system. . . . The electricity may become as powerful as to literally knock cattle off their feet, in case they keep endeavoring to break over. Stampedes are the only things that can accomplish a break. As to the telephone feature, the cowboys will all carry hand-phones, and by grounding and fastening to the electrified wire at any point of the fence they can ring the bell at the ranch office. Then changing to the telephone wire they can talk over it. Should this electrified wire break at any time the bell is started ringing, and by that the accident is made known.

With the successful conclusion of the experiment it was generally understood that the system would be substituted for the fourteen hundred miles of fence that had already been built upon the XIT Ranch. Amazed at such evidences of progress the editor exclaimed: "Where will science lead next?"<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *The Tascosa Pioneer*, January 14, 1888.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, March 17, 1888.

No doubt those old cowboys asked the same question, and what fluent, sarcastic comment must have poured from the bunk houses and cow camps as they thought of carrying telephones upon their saddles, and calling in to headquarters that an LX bull had torn down the east fence, or that Old Dynamite had been bitten by a rattlesnake! That dream, as even a tenderfoot should have predicted, was not to come to realization.

The cowboys were all skeptical of the practicability of the electric fence, but none more so than "Little Jack" Luckett, range rider on the Alamocitos. Repeatedly warned by the electrician of the danger from touching the second and fourth wires, "Little Jack" jogged along the new-fangled fence line eyeing it in mistrust. He could not resist an experiment. He seized a piece of wire six or seven feet long and by means of a stick looped one end over a charged wire fence. His horse, with dangling bridle reins, stood basking in the sun and perhaps dreaming of the luscious pasturage along the Alamocitos. Man's thirst for scientific knowledge always takes precedence over regard for simple animal feelings, and "Little Jack" raised the end of the wire upon the stick until it made contact with the bridle bits. No more tender spot could have been touched than the pony's mouth, and the little horse must have thought that lightning had struck him. He reared up, pawing at his head, and fell over backwards upon the saddle. Scrambling to his feet he set out for the ranch as hard as he could run, and "Little Jack" walked in, cursing the eminent success of his experiment.<sup>22</sup>

The LX Ranch also tried out the electric fence, but it was an impractical venture.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> J. Frank Mitchell to J. E. H., June 10, 1927.

<sup>23</sup> E. C. G. Austen to J. E. H., July 7, 1927.

Prairie fires were among the most serious of range troubles. Loss of grass meant loss of cattle, and upon the outbreak of a fire every cowboy left whatever work he was doing and went to fight it. A chuck wagon set out for the scene to feed the fighters, who worked night and day.

The dangers from prairie fires are frequently exaggerated. Seldom did they result in loss of life. While freighting a load of corn from Amarillo across the XIT to the 7D ranch in 1896, Bill Elkins laid back upon the sacks and slept while his six-horse team walked on down the road. A prairie fire blew into his horses while he slept, and they whirled to run before it. The fire caught them, one horse dropped dead in the harness, and the others had much hair burned off, but Bill escaped from his burning sacks of grain.<sup>24</sup>

Several bad fires burned much of the XIT range. Buffalo Springs had a severe fire in 1885. Frank Yearwood and his Spring Lake cowboys fought one upon that division in 1887 until a snowstorm put it out. Lightning weirdly played over the Plains during the storm, and the cowboys, completely lost, attempted to re-set the fire to keep from freezing, but the snowstorm was too heavy.<sup>25</sup>

One of the worst prairie fires of the western Panhandle broke out in the LFD country of New Mexico late in November, 1894. A west wind sent it racing toward the Spring Lake ranges. For a week before it reached the state line smoke hung over the Texas Plains like the heavy haze of Indian summer. Every night Syndicate cowboys saw its red glow rise and fall like the distant aurora of the northern lights. Checked here and there by fighting cowboys, it broke forth afresh and crossed into the Syndicate range where the Running Water "Draw" is cut by the New Mexico

<sup>24</sup> B. P. Abbott, as cited.

<sup>25</sup> J. Frank Yearwood, as cited; M. Huffman, as cited.



line to the south of Farwell, Texas. Pres Abbott, a Spring Lake cowboy, was hauling a load of pipe to a well-driller's camp on Frio "Draw." When the advance tongues of flame came through, striking the Syndicate on a twenty-mile front, he turned one of the mules he was driving loose, jumped upon the other bareback, and rode into the Running Water Camp. He met Fred Finnicum, the camp man, coming in from his ride, and together they fought the fire all night. About daylight they met the riders from Blackwater and Red Tower Camps. After getting a bite to eat, they rode down Running Water "Draw" and fought fire along the Blackwater Pasture fence in an attempt to save the grass there. Cattle, in passing back and forth along the fence, had beaten out "cow trails" running east and west. The fire was burning from west to east, but a prairie fire spreads to either side, ever widening the path of flame. Using these cow trails as fire guards, the cowboys fought to prevent the fire from spreading south.

Mac Huffman, foreman at Spring Lake, with two of his "windmillers," joined the original four about the middle of the afternoon. By evening they had worked eastward almost to Red Tower, and the camp man went in, cooked, and brought out to the others some very bad biscuits and bacon. A brisk wind blew up and for a time no attempt was made to fight the advancing flames. Eleven men were fighting the fire along its southern edge when it crossed the east line of the Syndicate's range. They turned and rode back to Red Tower, where Jack Bradford had one "hot roll" made up of a tarp and three "suggans." At one o'clock in the morning the eleven men spread these "suggans" and their saddle blankets upon the floor of the camp, and had their first sleep in forty-two hours.



PURE-BRED ABERDEEN ANGUS BULLS WITH AN ENTIRE PASTURE TO THEMSELVES



THE OLD MILLER HERD OF PURE-BRED HEREFORD CATTLE WHICH WAS PURCHASED BY THE XIT

About three o'clock someone got up and looked out to the west. The wind had changed to the north and the fire had broken across into Blackwater pasture behind them, and was burning south. After a little coffee, bacon, and bread they set out again. They fought for the remainder of the night, all day, and until two o'clock next morning. Three of the boys dropped into Spring Lake for a little sleep and the others stayed with the fire. At daylight these three returned to the blistering work. The fire reached the Sand Hill Country in southern Lamb County that day, and about four o'clock in the afternoon was extinguished. The first two cowboys who began fighting the fire had been working almost continuously for three nights and almost four days. The first night they did not lie down, the second they slept two hours, and the third three. Rawhide could not have been tougher.<sup>26</sup>

All rode to Spring Lake the fourth night and went to bed to sleep until early daylight. Mac Huffman "rustled" them out and sent cowboys in every direction to scout out the country for dead cattle and to see if there was any unburned grass. Along Blackwater "Draw" smoking ash heaps showed where haystacks had been, and mile after mile of black land stretched to the north and to the south with not a spear of grass left. Cattle had drifted to the waterings where the grass was tramped away, and very few had been burned to death.

That afternoon sweating horses brought riders into Spring Lake from every direction at a "long lope." Their reports showed that Syndicate land almost twenty by sixty miles, from the Canadian breaks to the Sand Hills had been burned clean of grass. The next morning Joe Anderson,

<sup>26</sup> B. P. Abbott, as cited.



mounted upon a gray horse called Dash, rode out of the corral, and before the short fall day was done rode into Amarillo, a distance of eighty-five miles, to report to Manager Boyce. Boyce was in Fort Worth when the fire started. His son, Al Boyce, had seen it and wired him. He came in on the train soon after Anderson reached Amarillo. Anderson met the train, reported, and Boyce went on to Channing that night. Montgomery, foreman of the Ojo Bravo, and some of his cowboys were giving all their attention to the mazes of the Old Virginia reel at a town dance. Boyce went to the dance and told Montgomery to forget the Old Dominion, take his outfit, and strike south to meet the cattle which would be heading north from Spring Lake. As the evening stars swung past the meridian, the outfit, with unfulfilled social obligations, rode south towards Torrey's Peak on the Canadian.

Boyce sent instructions back to Spring Lake by Anderson for all cattle to be placed upon the trail for the Canadian. There was dire necessity for hurry. With every available man in the saddle and the "windmiller" as cook, the wagon left Spring Lake upon the first morning of December. The first roundup was thrown together on Frio "Draw," seven miles east of the site of Friona Town. Not counting calves, 4300 head of cattle were counted out to Montgomery. He swung his wagon around and without loss of time was upon the trail for the unburned breaks, declaring he would not stop his outfit that night nor the next day until he had the herd upon water.

Huffman rounded up the west half of the Capitol Pasture the next day and placed 4500 head, "above calves," upon the trail. In spite of "played out" horses, and a snowstorm to face, he placed this big herd, far too big for easy driving, upon the Canadian at the mouth of Skunk Arroyo with the



loss of but fifteen calves, which broke back from the herd, and which the horses were too weak to "head off."<sup>27</sup>

Fire guards later came into use upon the ranch. Two strips of land a few feet wide, and some twenty or thirty feet apart, were plowed around the pasture. Then in the fall, when the grass became dry and subject to burning, the cowboys chose a day when there was no wind, and burned the grass from between the guards. One trailed a burning, kerosene-soaked rope behind his horse and jogged along between the guards setting the grass on fire. Others watched to see that the flames did not break over.<sup>28</sup>

Fighting a fire by setting back fires was a dangerous practice and was not generally resorted to. The most effective way of fighting fire was by the use of drags. Upon arriving at the fire one of the cowboys roped a yearling or a two-year-old, another shot it or cut its throat, and one side was quickly skinned from belly to back. The head was cut off so as not to be in the way and ropes were tied to one front and one hind leg. The skinned side was turned downward and with ropes upon their saddle horns, two cowboys dragged this along the line of the fire, one riding to either side of the blaze. The loose hide flopped out behind and helped extinguish the flames.<sup>29</sup>

The horsemen gauged their speed by how fast the cowboys on foot were able to follow the drag, beating out with wet gunny sacks, saddle blankets, or brooms, the fragments of fire left after the drag had passed over. The horse pulling from the burned side was changed every twenty or thirty minutes, else the hot ground baked his hoofs. Failure to change an Escarbada horse soon enough resulted in all

<sup>27</sup> B. P. Abbott, as cited.

<sup>28</sup> J. E. Moore to J. E. H., July 6, 1927.

<sup>29</sup> Ira Aten, as cited; C. F. Vincent, as cited.

his hoofs coming off. Other horses were similarly ruined by losing one or more hoofs.<sup>30</sup>

In the late nineties chain drags were supplied each division. These drags resembled fish nets in appearance, were about eight feet by ten in size, and were held in shape by an iron pipe at either end. They too were dragged by the horn of the saddle.<sup>31</sup>

When the grass was dry every precaution was taken to prevent the outbreak of fires. Aten ordered his men to smoke only around the waterings, and while they did not always obey orders, they were careful not to drop a cigarette stub upon the range. Cattle rustlers from New Mexico attempted to burn the Escarbada out, confident that they could steal with ease if they could force Aten's discharge.

A present citizen of the Plains, enjoying the deference paid old age, once helped set fire to the Escarbada range. The XIT cowboys recognized him, and Aten rode over to the Strip upon his trail, and then to Endee, with mind fully made up that at least one man would burn no more Syndicate grass. The grass burner left for Cripple Creek, Colorado, and never returned until Aten had moved to Imperial Valley, a thousand miles away.<sup>32</sup> No philosophy of passive resistance prompted the actions of these men who protected the grass when it was dry and brown; who rode winter line protecting fences; who kept their guns oiled for depredating rustlers. Not a case was taken to court from the Escarbada Ranch during the ten years Aten was foreman.

Sound objections may be raised to this frontier conception of the individuality of the law. Theorists vent a howl against the extra-legal measures of the West. But the West

<sup>30</sup> Ira Aten, as cited; J. E. Moore to J. E. H., July 6, 1927; McClure, "Among the Cowboys of Texas," 21; C. Goodnight to J. E. H., April 8, 1927.

<sup>31</sup> Ira Aten, as cited; J. P. McDonald, as cited; C. F. Vincent, as cited.

<sup>32</sup> Ira Aten, as cited.



WM. POWELL HEREFORDS ON THE SYNDICATE RANGE, FULL, FAT, AND LAZY IN THE WARM SUNSHINE



Photos Copyright by Erwin E. Smith

HELL-BENT FOR A DRINK IN OLD TASCOSA, WHERE FINE OLD LIQUORS  
COULD ONCE BE HAD IN ABUNDANCE FROM WITHIN THOSE CRUMBLING  
WALLS OF 'DOBE



was a land of radical facts where men wore boots and carried guns; where Justinian and Caesar were unknown. Its men were the law. They wanted results, not legal theory, and they got them. Men whose blood leaped at the fragrance of powder smoke were the men who made the West.

Careful to see that neighboring riders respected its property, the XIT management was even more careful that its own cowboys rode trails that were straight. Findlay and Boyce drafted a code in January of 1888 called "General Rules of the XIT Ranch." The twenty-three requirements of this code constituted a radical departure from old range etiquette and practice.<sup>33</sup> From the first the cowboys were told:

"Don't steal a beef for us! If you do we'll fire you."<sup>34</sup> Cowboys were forbidden to carry sixshooters, to keep private horses at their camps, to drink, to entertain gamblers at their camps, to gamble, or to run mustangs, and antelope with XIT horses.<sup>35</sup> There was much infringement of these rules, particularly that of carrying guns, but those governing liquor and gambling were rigidly enforced.<sup>36</sup>

Another innovation introduced upon the ranges was the observance of Sunday as a day of rest.<sup>37</sup> But in theory alone was Sunday observed. Cow work, once started, went forward seven days a week for seven or eight months of the year, during which time the Lord was sadly neglected.

Few diversions broke the daily routine of winter work. A little reading matter was a welcome addition to any camp. Practical jokes were perpetrated upon unsuspecting

<sup>33</sup> *The Fort Worth Gazette*, September 25, 1892.

<sup>34</sup> M. Huffman, as cited.

<sup>35</sup> Ms., "General Rules of the XIT Ranch" (Chicago Files). See appendix for these rules.

<sup>36</sup> McClure "Among the Cowboys of Texas," 15; J. E. Moore to J. E. H., Nov. 8, 1927; Harvey Cash to J. E. H., June 20, 1927.

<sup>37</sup> *The Tascosa Pioneer*, May 26, 1888.



tenderfeet, and a kangaroo court sometimes imposed sentence upon the transgressor of Western etiquette. One such is described in *The Tascosa Pioneer*, August 6, 1887:

Kangaroo court opened at the LX ranch Monday with one case on the docket. Dick Cross had been summoned to answer before that august tribunal for a glaring misdemeanor—lying idle about the ranch while he should have been out rustling for a job. James Wyness wore the judicial purple and tioga of judge, J. D. Bain represented the commonwealth in the responsible position of prosecuting attorney, James Gober was Sheriff and his honor appointed Mr. W. D. Lard, Esq., to defend the accused. It is said that Judge Wyness presided with a dignity that would have adorned a higher place; that Sheriff Gober displayed nerve and firmness of an order that was the admiration of the large audience; that Attorneys Bain and Lard surprised the assembly with the wonder of their legal acumen and towering eloquence, and that even the prisoner awaited his fate with a courage and calmness that lent interest to the occasion. But for all the wonderful efforts of Counsel Lard, who is said to be something of a real attorney, the verdict was against the defendant. The evidence, it seems, was really overwhelming, and the prosecution carried the day. The prisoner was sentenced to eighteen licks with the leggings on the back, which Deputy John Watkins administered with a will. This responsible duty over, court adjourned and the late prisoner pulled his freight.

Outlaw horses furnished some diversions and considerable practice in riding. Governor Hogg, Hell in the Neck, Channing Dun, Vinegarron, and Milkshake caused many riders to "hit the dust."<sup>38</sup> Chasing mustangs, though prohibited by ranch rules, was exciting sport for men who loved horses. Outlaw steers furnished fun and caused trouble.

At one time [said Dr. J. H. Wayland, of Plainview] there was an outlaw steer on the Yellow House Ranch. The cowboys made up their minds to catch him. They stationed themselves at different places where he might pass after being jumped. Will Stone, who was mounted on a big bay horse, took a position on a ridge. The boys who jumped the steer brought him by. Will roped the steer as he passed, but before

<sup>38</sup> B. P. Abbott, as cited; C. F. Vincent, as cited.

he could whirl his horse, the steer hit the end of the rope and jerked his horse down. Will's head popped against the ground causing concussion of the brain. They sent for me. For nine days and nights he was unconscious and never said a word. Then he came to, and as he regained consciousness he was cussing that steer. He thought he still had him on the end of his rope.

I have performed operations and amputated men's legs here on the Plains with no other antiseptic than a gallon of water in which had been dissolved a cup of common table salt. I never had an infection. When Mac Huffman broke his leg at Spring Lake ranch, December 24, 1894, the cowboys took turns, of thirty minutes each, propping one foot against him and pulling straight out on his leg. Another continually poured cold water on the break. The pulling kept the bones in place and the water kept down the fever. Though they had to ride forty-five miles after me, and hours passed before I got there, there was not a bit of fever in the leg and all I had to do was to put on the splints.<sup>39</sup>

Trouble ever dogged the boot heels of the general manager of a ranch that took such an arbitrary stand for law and order. Over on the Rito Blanco breaking horses for Henry Kimball in 1891 were two hard cases, Tom and Dave Graham. Boyce knew their history, and wishing to see the country rid of them, was instrumental in their being discharged. Into Channing they rode during the late fall, intent upon shooting Boyce. They first got drunk and for a while practiced shooting at the bolt heads that held the bar of the hitching rack in place.

Then they went to the office of the general headquarters of the ranch there in town. Dave went in expecting to find Boyce, but instead W. S. Mabry sat at the desk writing a letter. Perhaps not knowing the difference, perhaps not caring, Dave threw down on Mabry but missed him. His gun was so close that the powder burned Mabry's face along the temple.<sup>40</sup> Mabry jumped up and ran over to Jim East's home.

<sup>39</sup> J. H. Wayland to J. E. H., June 26, 1927.

<sup>40</sup> James H. East to J. E. H., February 22, 1928. E. C. G. Austen to J. E. H., July 7, 1927.

"Mabry wasn't armed and this made him pretty mad," said East. The two, arming themselves with 44 Winchester, set out after the Grahams, who, after plundering Humphrey's store, had taken refuge in Kimball's blacksmith shop. The Grahams had "taken in the town" so completely that someone had wired Tobe Robinson, sheriff of the county, at Hartley that he had better come down. Tobe hopped a freight train and got in to Channing as drunk as a lord. He brought a ranger by the name of Owens with him.

The Grahams had gone from the blacksmith shop into a pump house near by. Robinson and the ranger came up as Mabry and East started out.

"Come on," Robinson said to Jim East. "You and Mabry go to one end of the house and Owens and I will go to the other. If they run out at the front door you and Mabry shoot them and we will attend to the back door."

Almost immediately Tom Graham appeared at the back door and Robinson, about fifteen feet away, called:

"Throw up your hands and surrender." Robinson was armed with a double-barrel shotgun and a sixshooter, and Owens carried a Winchester. But Tom Graham, who was a fearless fellow, answered:

"Go to hell! I won't surrender to anybody," and drawing his sixshooter, shot, hitting Robinson just below the hip. Jim East described what took place.

"Robinson had stood there like a 'gawk' and hadn't fired with his shotgun. As he fell he jerked his sixshooter and shot Graham, giving him a scalp wound that didn't knock him down. Owens stood there like a poor boy with the colic and never fired a shot.

"Then Mabry and I heard Dave and a tramp, who had thrown in with them, start out at the front. We thought

Owen would attend to Tom and we ran back around to the front. Both of us opened fire, shooting Dave through the side and thigh, and the tramp didn't offer much resistance. I called my brother Bob to take Robinson down to the hotel, as we thought he was bleeding to death.

"By this time it was dark, Tom had run down to a wind-mill tower about fifty yards from the house and taken shelter behind it. We exchanged several shots and then Tom called:

"Jim, is that you out there?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Don't shoot any more, Jim' he said. 'My brains are shot out and I want to surrender.'

"All right,' I answered. 'Leave your sixshooter there and come out with your hands up.' He did. Mabry and I took him to the hotel where they had Tobe. Then we got him into the light and the blood from his wound was running down through his eyes. He kept rubbing his hand through the stream and looking at it.

"Aw hell,' he said, 'that's not brains. If I had known that I wouldn't have surrendered.'

"There was no jail at Hartley or Channing, and we took them to Tascosa. The grand jury met and indicted Tom, who was the worst of the two, not for attempted murder, but for breaking into Humphrey's store. The only regret Mabry and I had was that we didn't finish him up that night."<sup>41</sup>

Thus many little incidents enlivened the XIT Ranch while the grass was dry and brown, and made the cowboys think life worth living until spring should come again.

<sup>41</sup>James H. East, as cited.



## CHAPTER XII

### *From Longhorn to Thoroughbred*

THE foundation herd of the XIT ranch was Longhorn "stuff." With favorable climate the breed was prolific. But Longhorn stock did not produce the quality of beef the market of the eighties was coming to demand. However, when bred to good sires, the cows produced stock of better beef qualities than the average Longhorn steer. Through the use of high grade bulls, a generous cut-back of undesirable stock, and the retention of heifer calves from year to year, what was originally a "cold blooded" herd might rapidly grow into good beef stock. This method of "grading up" was practiced on most Texas ranges. The XIT adopted it.

During the decade and a half following the Civil War Longhorn cattle were the economic salvation of Texas. They were gaunt and wiry, independent and perverse. As a product of the wilderness they did well where blooded cattle would have perished of drouth, travel, and thirst. They were more easily handled than blooded stock, both in the roundup and upon the trail. Because of breadth of horn they spaced themselves better under herd—keeping plenty of room—thus traveling with greater ease, less heat, and less loss of flesh. Their hoofs were tougher, their legs longer, and their endurance greater than high grade "stuff." They ranged a much wider scope of country, went longer without water, suffered more hardships, and took better



care of themselves upon the range or in stampede than any other breed. Old age did not find them toothless as it often finds improved cattle. In age and in breeding usefulness they lived double the span of their successors. In every Longhorn herd there trailed steers with personalities as clear cut as the men who drove them. Those steers will live in story.

One named Old Blue led JA herds up the trail to Dodge City. During eight seasons he walked at the "point," his lank, blue form, and the clatter of the bell he wore directing the beeves that trailed behind. He was never shipped to market, but was always brought back with the remuda. He was a pet that saved the Palo Duro cowboys much work in crossing rivers, in holding a course, and in corralling at Dodge. The names of many Palo Duro cowpunchers are forgotten. That of Old Blue is not.

Longhorns always cared for their young with the solicitude and ferocity of a wild animal. Rarely could a Longhorn calf be jumped from the bed in which its mother had left it and chased so far away but that it would return to that very spot to meet its mother again. With sensitive nose, ears, and eyes as aids to protection, these cattle had lived in the wild state in Texas for more than two centuries: ever since 1693 when Father Massanet deserted his East Texas Mission. They identified their calves more by smell than by sight, and some trailed by scent like a "hound dog."

One spring the Canadian Roundup had worked down the river to the neighborhood of Adobe Walls. Two or three hundred head of cattle were being held under herd. Each day they were driven on to the scene of the next day's work. In the herd was a large, black, line-backed cow weighing close to twelve hundred pounds. She was a

descendant of the wild herds that once roamed the Texas prairie lands, but had been bought in New Mexico by the JA outfit.

One morning as daylight came and relieved the last riders on night herd, the cowboys discovered that the line-backed cow had given birth to a calf. The cook was supposed to load the new-born calves of his own brand upon his wagon and haul them to the next camp. The JA cook pulled out, followed the roundup by a circular route twelve miles down the river. But he forgot the black cow's calf, which was left upon the bed-ground. As soon as the outfit made camp, J. E. Farrington, the foreman, missed the calf. He was a sensitive, sympathetic man, and took the back track in search of it. He found the calf upon the bed ground, placed it across the saddle in front of him, and struck straight across country to the camp. In the meantime the day herders allowed the cow to escape. Farrington, apprised of this, knew that she would return to the bed ground in search of the calf, and turned back to get her. He took the direct route by which he had just come in. Within a mile or two of the bed ground he saw the cow coming to meet him along the trail he had made while carrying the calf. His curiosity was aroused and he dropped behind to watch her. Like a fox hound upon a warm track, she followed along Farrington's trail by the scent of the calf he had carried to camp. By sundown she reached the herd, and after the trip of twenty miles, soon found her calf. Farrington rode to the chuck wagon, wiser in the ways of cows. "This," said the observant Goodnight, "is the most remarkable example of cow sense I have ever known."<sup>1</sup>

Next to maternal affection the Longhorns' attachment to

<sup>1</sup> Charles Goodnight to J. E. H., February 25, 1927.

their native soil was a predominant trait. Texas steers that grazed the ranges of Montana hankered to return to the sunny Nueces country. Upon escaping along the trails they back-tracked to their original stamping grounds like a lost kitten.

At Horsehead Crossing, in the late sixties, Goodnight lost a Longhorn cow from his herd. The herd had just been trailed west from Palo Pinto County on its way to the northwestern Territories. Upon his return to Palo Pinto from the trail, Goodnight found the cow on her home range. She had made the return trip of about four hundred miles alone. Some years later, in 1875, Goodnight took three herds from the John Chisum range on the Pecos, in southern New Mexico, and sold them to Hunter and Evans at Granada, Colorado. These big dealers sent them into the Indian Nation, to Eagle Chief, to be wintered. The following year Goodnight located the Palo Duro Ranch in the Panhandle. Two of these steers crossed the wilderness of western Oklahoma, pushed through the thousands of buffalo upon the range of the eastern Panhandle, and drifted into the Palo Duro in an attempt to return, by a direct route, to their home range on the Pecos. Their instinct of direction was as canny as an Indian's, for the trail by which they reached Indian Territory looped to the north and west through Kansas and Colorado for more than a thousand miles. They were taking the short cut home, not more than half as long.

Before the XIT and other ranches fenced the Panhandle country, the Northern Drift gave much trouble. Severe blizzards drove the cattle from the Beaver, the Cimarron, the Arkansas, and even the Platte Rivers down into Texas. Even as far south as the Pease, the roundups "cut" cattle belonging on the Platte in Nebraska. Those Texas steers

placed on northern ranges, drifted before blizzards with the stride of a horse. Among famous walkers a worthy companion to Old Blue was a steer of similar color called Old Slate. Like Andy Adams' poker steer, "he was born in a chaparral thicket south of the Nueces River in Texas." The Civil War could not have been over when he arrived and began to do a little fighting of his own. He grew to maturity in the Santa Gertrudes country, and came to love the mesquite and chaparral as only a steer can. Jim East, now of Douglas, Arizona, met Old Slate while preparing for the trail.

In 1876 I was driving for King and Kennedy [he said]. A good many of our cattle were sold in Colorado. Bates and Beal, who started the LX ranch on the Canadian, bought some of them. In the herd that we delivered to them on the Arkansas, near Granada, loomed Old Slate, the biggest steer I ever saw. He wore King and Kennedy's Laurel Leaf brand and was what we call a "moss-head," a worthless old thing, as he must have been fifteen years old then. His color was a blue-slate, and he looked like he was seven feet tall. We delivered the herd and turned back for South Texas. From the banks of the Arkansas Old Slate, towering above all the other steers, watched us go.

Then one day during the winter a rider on the Santa Gertrudes found Old Slate grazing in the brush. Through southern Colorado, across the Panhandle, and down through Texas, Old Slate had trudged the miles away, and now contentedly rubbed his neck against a mesquite, a thousand miles by trail from where the South Texas cowboys had left him.

Again in the spring of 1877 [East continued], we had Old Slate in another herd headed for the same ranch on the Arkansas. We delivered him with the other steers. For three seasons the riders managed to keep him there, and he grew larger than ever. But he was always thinking of the chaparral of South Texas. In 1880 John Ray brought a bunch of LIT cattle down to the LXs, and Old Slate was among them. I had left

South Texas and was working for the LX outfit. We had crossed the Panhandle on our second trip north with Old Slate and I thought it was the prettiest cow country I ever saw. But Old Slate did not. He still had South Texas on his mind.

We kept him on the ranch until we started a herd to Caldwell, Kansas, for shipment to market at St. Louis. Old Slate was thrown in. In the herd was a six-year-old, red, white-faced steer called Baldy, and a spotted one that the boys called Christ. Both kept wanting to head for South Texas. But Old Slate was the worst. We "necked" Baldy and Christ together and kept them in the herd. Old Slate was turned over to me. I put a bell on him and roped and hobbled him every night, and we finally got him to Caldwell. His horns were so wide that two men had to twist his head to one side to get him through the car door.

The train pulled out for Kansas City, and Harry Derrick went with it to care for the shipment. At Pierce City, Missouri, the cattle were unloaded to be watered and fed. Old Slate, tired of captivity and as mad as he could be, jumped over the high, railroad corral fence and went tearing down through a cornfield, scaring the farmers out of their wits. They pulled down their old squirrel rifles and shot and killed him.

Rebellious Old Slate never reached the butcher's block, but died in a cornfield of Missouri, still yearning for the chaparral of South Texas.

Cattle of such traits stocked the West, and formed the foundation herd for the XIT ranch. By the close of the eighties over 130,000 head were inside XIT fences.

Colonel Babcock, in recommending the establishment of the ranch in his report of 1882, had the use of thoroughbred bulls in mind.<sup>2</sup> In 1876 Goodnight brought about 150 head of high grade Shorthorn cows into the Panhandle with his first herd. These did not prove satisfactory. Polled Angus were scarce and high of price, and Panhandle cowmen turned to the Hereford.<sup>3</sup> In 1882 O. H. Nelson brought the first registered Hereford bulls to the Panhandle. During the next eight years he placed over 10,000 high grade Hereford bulls upon Panhandle ranges. The demand for Herefords in

<sup>2</sup> Babcock, *Prospectus*, 22.

<sup>3</sup> C. Goodnight to J. E. H., June 1, 1928.



England in 1883 was said to have been "phenomenal,"<sup>4</sup> and breeders were being taxed to supply the American demand. By the late eighties this demand had so depleted the supply and increased the price upon high grade males that the XIT was unable to use them in large numbers.<sup>5</sup> Many low grade bulls were placed upon the ranch in the late eighties, but better ones were bought each year until 1892, after which date only pure-bred bulls were bought. With low grade cows and no more good bulls than the ranch had at first, improvement of the herd was slow.<sup>6</sup>

In 1889 systematic work of herd improvement began. Such work, slow under most favorable conditions, was made more difficult because of the size of the ranch. Not all of the cows upon the ranch were of the same grade. Different grades occupied different pastures. Males of three different breeds had been brought in: Hereford, Durham, and Polled Angus. Certain grades of cows early seemed to lend themselves to improvement better with the Herefords, others with the Angus, and still others with the Shorthorns. Gradually the selection and sorting, which seemed most in keeping with this improvement, was done. Since the ranch was about two hundred miles long, and, on the average, twenty-five miles wide, fenced and cross-fenced,

it offered good opportunities to test these three breeds under practically similar conditions and after a few years the pastures in which the Shorthorn bulls were kept and those in which the Hereford bulls were kept and those in which the Angus bulls were kept began to show the respective breed characteristics and every year, by careful selection of animals—undesirable because of color or quality—the herds rapidly assumed to all appearances the quality and character of the pure breeds.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup>*The Dallas Herald*, August 23, 1883.

<sup>5</sup>Ms., "The Capitol Syndicate or XIT Ranch," 2.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup>George Findlay to Chas. Gray, May 20, 1910.

The XIT definitely set itself the task of determining, so far as it could by such an experiment, what breed was best adapted to the Plains country. The results are interesting, particularly since the conclusion as to Polled Angus cattle differs from that reached by most pioneer cowmen of the Panhandle.

Buffalo Springs was early set aside as a steer division, Middle Water was used for culls, and the Rito Blanco and Alamositos country along the Canadian were set aside for Polled Angus. Ojo Bravo and those divisions to the south of the river, the Escarbada, Spring Lake, and Yellow House, were set aside as Hereford breeding ranges, but Durhams were placed in a few pastures on some of these divisions.<sup>8</sup> Early cowmen from Colorado had brought some Shorthorn stock with them. Thus they were not new to the Panhandle when the Syndicate introduced its grade and registered males. Already some cowmen had decided that they were not hardy enough for this climate. The breed did well, but, lacking the rustling qualities of the other two, was not long retained.<sup>9</sup>

The use of Herefords in the Panhandle was widespread. Herefords were among the first grade bulls to be bought by the XIT and soon four divisions were devoted to them. George Findlay, who was general manager of the ranch from the Chicago office at that time, favored the Angus. He gave as one reason for the spread of the Herefords the fact that they "were being pushed by a coterie of breeders exultant over the conflicts they had gone through with the Shorthorn sponsors"—breeders who were aggressive in the advertisement of their stock and who were able to supply the demand with reasonably priced bulls. Therefore "the

<sup>8</sup> R. L. Duke to J. E. H., July 6, 1927.

<sup>9</sup> George Findlay to Chas. Gray, as cited.

Herefords soon became the dominant breed in the Panhandle."<sup>10</sup>

The Syndicate bought Herefords from some of the most prominent breeders of the country. Early purchases were made from the noted pioneer breeders, Wm. Powell and T. L. Miller of Beecher, Illinois. In the very early nineties a string of good bulls were bought from Goodnight and placed upon the Yellow House division. In 1892 a registered herd of forty-four bulls and one hundred and eleven cows were bought from T. L. Miller, which, with a few registered cows from the Farwell Brothers of Montezuma, Iowa, formed the basis for a registered herd of Herefords for the ranch. From time to time fresh blood was introduced, and eventually this herd practically supplied the ranch with bulls. By 1894 registered bulls had been placed in the Sod House pasture on the Yellow House, and soon T. F. B. Sotham was coming there to purchase the grade calves for eastern feeders.<sup>11</sup> The Herefords were preëminently good rustlers, hardy, prolific, and possessed of fine beef qualities. They continue to be, by far, the most popular breed of range cattle in the Southwest.

In spite of Findlay's keen interest in the Polled Angus, Boyce became discouraged and was about to ship them all to market. Goodnight suggested that he place the bulls in a pasture where there were none of any other breed, and place all his off color cows with them. He tried this plan and was well pleased with the results. But the Angus never gained the favor its supporters thought it deserved.

While the Herefords were being brought to the attention of everyone in search of good stock through the enthusiastic advertising of their breeders, and were obtainable in

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Ms., "The Capitol Syndicate," etc., as cited; H. K. Baughn to J. E. H., June 25, 1927; *The Tascosa Pioneer*, May 10, 1890.

good numbers and at reasonable prices, the Angus were hard to obtain, high of price, new to the section, and handicapped by the color prejudice many held against them. Breeders of other stock, anxious to forward sales of their own, disparaged the Angus, claiming that the bulls bunched together on the range, causing a short calf crop, that improvement did not take place so rapidly as with Hereford and Shorthorn, that they were not hardy enough to stand the hot summers or the cold winters, in short, that they were unsuitable for range purposes. "Therefore," wrote Findlay, "the Angus came into . . . [the Panhandle] at a rather unpropitious time and had to fight against ignorance, prejudice and jealousy for its foothold there. These sentiments were not wanting on the XIT Ranch."<sup>12</sup>

The Alamocitos pasture was the first to be set aside for Polled Angus stock. In 1891 actual work of "trimming up" the herd began, and soon the entire Rito Blanco division of which the Alamocitos was a part, was set aside for the breed. From year to year all the old cows with horns were cut out, and the blacks, the "muleys," and others showing the Angus strain were kept upon the range. In time all the horned "stuff" was disposed of, and a black, polled herd, predominantly Angus, was achieved.<sup>13</sup> In 1892, following the same plan as with the Herefords, fifty-five registered cows and a number of bulls were bought from Arnold Brothers, of Hansford County, Texas, and from the Farwell Brothers, of Montezuma, Iowa, for the beginning of a bull herd. Also Anderson and Findlay of Lake Forest, and George Farwell of Mt. Morris, Illinois, furnished the ranch with Angus sires.<sup>14</sup> In 1892 the ranch owned 1000

<sup>12</sup> George Findlay to Chas. Gray, as cited.

<sup>13</sup> R. L. Duke to J. E. H., July 6, 1927.

<sup>14</sup> Ms., "The Capitol Syndicate or XIT Ranch," 2.

head of thoroughbred Hereford and Angus cattle. Notwithstanding the maintenance of herds for raising bulls, during 1898, \$87,000 were spent for Hereford, Durham, and Angus sires.<sup>15</sup>

No breed of cattle has ever "handled" so well upon the range as the Longhorn, and probably none so poorly as the Angus. In herd the Angus become excited and pay little attention to their calves. "Muley stuff" jams together more closely, suffers more from heat, and loses more weight from handling than "horned stuff," unless cowboys exercise the greatest patience.<sup>16</sup> But Findlay was enthusiastic over the results that the Angus showed.

After the adoption of the three breeds [Findlay wrote], each was given a very fair trial and the result . . . demonstrated that there was no breed better adapted for the range than the Angus. They were prolific, hardy, good rustlers, early maturers and good sellers. The steers of this breed are very generally the first to be sold off the range and have usually commanded a premium over the others.<sup>17</sup>

In 1889 there were practically the same number of cows in the Alamocitos pasture in which Angus bulls were placed as in the Minneosa pasture where Hereford bulls were placed. In 1890 the calves branded in the Alamocitos pasture numbered 3064, in the Minneosa pasture 2698 and there were branded in the pasture in which the black bulls were a larger number of calves for the years immediately following than in the other. The actual results on this ranch satisfied the owners and those connected with it that there is nothing at all in the claim that the Angus are poor breeders on the range.<sup>18</sup>

The Company came to regard the Angus, Findlay continued,

both as feeders and beeves—the quickest and best sellers, and when time and conditions permit we have always found it to our advantage to ship the Angus beeves by themselves as there seemed to be a wider

<sup>15</sup> Gough, "Sketch of the XIT Ranch," 7.

<sup>16</sup> J. E. Moore to J. E. H., July 6, 1927.

<sup>17</sup> George Findlay to Chas. Gray, as cited.

<sup>18</sup> George Findlay to the Gazette.





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AT TASCOSA THEY "BELLIED" UP TO THE BAR, WHERE THE JINGLING OF SILVER BROUGHT  
THE TINKLING OF GLASSES IN ANSWER



TASCOSA CLAIMED THAT SHE HAD A RANGE TRADE TERRITORY REACHING FROM UTE CREEK TO THE PALO DURO. ALL RANGE  
WORK SKILFULLY DONE BY THESE OLD METHODS WAS INTERESTING. BUT CATCHING HORSES FROM ROPE CORRALS IS ALWAYS  
PRETTY WORK

market for them in the stockyards and they have almost invariably brought better prices than the others.<sup>19</sup>

When the sales of land began, making it necessary to dispose of most of the cattle, the Durham and Herefords were sold first. By 1910 the Angus was the only breeding stock upon the ranch. "This decision," to quote Findlay again, "arrived at after probably better facilities for testing the breeds than have ever been afforded anywhere else, speaks more for the breed as a range breed than columns of query and argument."<sup>20</sup> The Angus herd, when the Rito Blanco was stocked at its heaviest, numbered close to 35,000 head, and even when the Alamocitos country was sold to Murdo McKenzie and the Matadors in 1901, there were still over 20,000 head. At the sale of the last cattle in 1912 this "was, for all practical beef purposes, a purebred herd."<sup>21</sup> From the Longhorn stock, in twenty-four years, the Syndicate built up what was undoubtedly the largest herd of high grade, Polled Angus cattle in Texas.<sup>22</sup>

Boyce took much pride in building, from a nondescript herd, one which commanded the attention of all feeders wherever good cattle were in demand. XIT cattle came to rank with the JA herds, the best in the country. Car-lots representing the different breeds were taken to leading livestock shows.<sup>23</sup> The champion yearling Aberdeen-Angus steers off grass at the Fort Worth show in 1900 were from the XIT. During the same year, at the Chicago International Live Stock Exposition for the Southwest district, the first, second, and third prizes for yearling steers off grass were awarded to the Angus, Hereford, and Shorthorn lots respectively. All awards went to cattle from this ranch.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> George Findlay to Chas. Gray, as cited.

<sup>21</sup> Ms., "The Capitol Syndicate or XIT Ranch," 2.

<sup>22</sup> H. F. Mitchell to J. E. H., June 10, 1927.

<sup>23</sup> Wm. Boyce to J. E. H., June 28, 1927.

Steer calves from the ranch took the same awards in the order of the breeds named. Two-year-old fed steers, bred upon the ranch, took the first three awards in their class for the Southwest. J. F. Kiester of Emery, Illinois, fed the Herefords which took first place in this class. The car-load of two-year-olds weighed 1431 pounds and sold at \$9.30 a hundred weight, which was claimed, at that time, "the highest price every brought by branded range-raised steers."<sup>24</sup>

In 1905 the Syndicate sent a lot of Angus steers to Denver, thence to Kansas City, and to Chicago. The lot took first prize in its class at every place. One steer was bought by a Chicago hotel for \$2,100. Everyone who ate there for the next three or four years had the opportunity of ordering at a very fancy price, if the menus were to be believed, a choice steak from this same prize Angus. That "muley" steer paid the hotel his cost many times over.<sup>25</sup>

The experiments of the XIT Ranch with the Hereford, Shorthorn, and Angus breeds was of much value to the Panhandle-Plains Country. The quality of these three herds emphasized the stock raising advantages of the region. Much profit accrued to the Panhandle through the reputation for good cattle which the XIT helped establish. The cattle of this part of Texas came to be known "as a class by themselves in outstanding excellence."<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Land Booklet*, 16, 17.

<sup>25</sup> R. L. Duke to J. E. H., July 6, 1927.

<sup>26</sup> Ms., "The Capitol Syndicate or XIT Ranch," 2.



## CHAPTER XIII

### *Old Tascosa*

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**A**MONG the tributaries of the Canadian in the western Panhandle is one named Atascosa. It is a stream of no great length, heading among the sand hills, wandering in uncertain course for a few miles along a bed of sand, to lose its clear current in the turgid waters of the river. The stream widens near its mouth to form a beautiful little valley, which is bounded by the Canadian to the south, and the rambling cap-rock to the north. Legend relates that a Mexican bogged his ox train in crossing the little stream many years ago. Therefore he named it *Atascosa*, which means boggy or quick-sandy.

Tradition further tells us that in this little valley the traders of New Mexico used to meet the Indians of the Plains, and that here they bartered items dear to the Indian's eye and palate for stolen horses and cattle. When the Indians were placed upon reservations the sheltered nook by the Canadian was deserted for a few years.

Then there was born to the Panhandle of Texas, in the spring of 1877, her second child. Sired of the frontier and nurtured from the breast of a vast and virgin pastoral country, she sprang to life, not full blown, but, withal, a lusty and vigorous infant. With something of poetic completeness she died with the frontier. After a decline of some years she came to an end in the middle nineties. Thus



closed the life span of Old Tascosa, second village of the Panhandle.

Her life history was short, varied, and tempestuous. Her citizenry, representative of the frontier, was exceedingly cosmopolitan. From East, North, and South came adventurous spirits; some seeking land and homes; some the business opportunities of a new country; many ranching enterprises; and more, with no definite purpose, found their way thither impelled by that urge which has ever set the face of the pioneer toward the setting sun. Horsemen all, they rode with ease; hardy, self-reliant, and individualistic, they moved with confidence. Southern Europe possessed temperamental representatives in bronzed sons who observed the Mexican holiday, "El Cinco de Mayo,"<sup>1</sup> as zealously as their ancestors ever celebrated the national holidays of Old Castile. Representative of the Nordic strain were aggressive men who recalled with pride that the sun never sets upon the crosses of St. Andrew and St. George. Into this melting pot of the frontier poured Anglo-American elements to produce a new culture that is distinctly Southwestern and altogether American.

Buffalo hunters came. After them bull whackers and mule skimmers, whose reputation for scorching, as well as charming, profanity has never been equalled, handled the long freight trains that brought the necessities of life—flour, beans, bacon, and chewing tobacco—from Dodge City. Across the southern Kansas plains, through the Neutral Strip, and on to Tascosa along a two-hundred-mile trail, they handled their "strings" of oxen, bringing food and news from the outside world.

But most prominent among the Tascosa types was the cowboy. From long months upon the range and trail he

<sup>1</sup>"The fifth of May" is the Mexican national holiday.



ONE OF THE FIRST SETTLER'S CABINS TO BE BUILT ON LAND SOLD FROM THE CAPITOL GRANT SOUTH OF THE CANADIAN,  
NEAR BOVINA



THIRTY YEARS AGO THE WHEAT RAISED ON THE TEXAS PLAINS WAS THRESHED BY HORSE-POWER.  
(PICTURE AT CANYON, TEXAS)

came there to drink and "celebrate," to dance and gamble, to be human and sociable. Scattered among them, as bow-legged as any, a "mustanger" was sometimes seen—a type long since passed. There were adventurous Englishmen, shrewd Scotchmen, and, as always, belligerent and happy representatives of the Emerald Isle. Men with Eastern culture and college educations lent dignity to the group.

Horses of unknown brands and of doubtful, though unquestioned, ownership, stamped many an hour away before hitching racks as their riders, of equally uncertain pasts, drank and gambled. A few professional gamblers regularly plied their trades. During the roundup seasons the stages from Dodge supplemented the local riff-raff with additional sporting men and women, the saloons did a fine trade, and the earnings of many cowboys changed pockets on the turn of a card at monte and poker. A little woman called "Frenchy" whose past rested safely among the unwritten biographies of creole New Orleans, sat before a table and dealt the Mexican game with graceful efficiency.<sup>2</sup>

Considering the love of the frontier folk for exciting sport, it is not surprising that horse racing was a popular diversion. Frequent races were run with a corresponding frequency of exchange of money.<sup>3</sup>

Rooster fighting was sometimes popular during the winter.<sup>4</sup> Rivaling this pastime was the Mexican sport known as "pulling the chicken." A description of one of these events is to be found in *The Tascosa Pioneer*, the newspaper of the town, of July 31, 1886. The sport celebrated San Diego's Day, July 25.

<sup>2</sup> Sources of this description: James H. East to J. E. H., September 27, 1927; E. C. G. Austen to J. E. H., July 7, 1927; John Snyder to J. E. H., June 30, 1926; Charles Goodnight to J. E. H., January 12, 1927.

<sup>3</sup> *The Tascosa Pioneer*, September 15, 1888.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, January 12, 1889.

A lusty young rooster was procured, and three hundred yards below town the fun opened. The rooster was buried in the earth, his head only being left above ground, and the young men and boys who wished to participate in this part of the programme were mounted and gathered about. . . . Then they dash by, one after another, and as they pass the rooster each man swings himself down from the saddle and reaches for its head. The chicken naturally dodges more or less and renders it no easy matter to catch him. Finally secured, however, by the lucky grab, the body is brought out by a jerk which generally breaks the neck, and the horseman, chicken in hand, dashes away at his best speed, all the rest giving chase for the possession of the rooster. If another overtakes him and wrests it from him, then he leads the race until someone else can take it.<sup>5</sup>

A dramatic club for the entertainment of the community was formed in 1888.<sup>6</sup> Young men of the town organized the "Tascosa Social Club," one purpose being that of minstrel entertainment.<sup>7</sup> For Washington's birthday it announced a program "to eclipse everything heretofore offered. The club is in shape, wrote Editor Rudolph (of *The Tascosa Pioneer*), to do just what it threatens."<sup>8</sup> A reading and lounging room was provided just next door to a saloon.<sup>9</sup> The "Tascosa Choir" gave an occasional card party,<sup>10</sup> while the good old conservative game of chess found a few devotees who spent their evenings "in a brown study over the absorbing perplexities" of it.<sup>11</sup> An oyster supper marked the superlative in a changing order,—a benefit for the Sunday school, which needed an organ.<sup>12</sup>

Not content with an organ, "common talk" declared that "the acquisition of a cornet band is the one thing

<sup>5</sup> See also the issue of June 23, 1888. For a good description of this game see R. B. Townsend, *Last Memories of a Tenderfoot*, New York, 1926, pp. 147-161.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, December 15, 1888.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, January 21, 1888.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, February 11, 1888.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, January 12, 1889.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, August 11, 1888.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, January 7, 1888.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, September 22, 1888.



needful, the achievement of all achievements that will render life worth living and write for us the brightest pages in Tascosa's history."<sup>13</sup> Tascosa soon had "the only cornet band in the country."

In this land of necessary ingenuity and adaptability, the village blacksmith became the coroner.<sup>14</sup> One wonders what grimly humorous twist of fate made him so, or was the work so strenuous!

The weekly and then semi-weekly arrival of the mails, with the coming of mule and oxen trains, always caused a slight flutter among the Tascosans, but the session days of district court, July the Fourth, and Christmas, always caused considerable stir. All the cowboys came in at Christmas. The fiddler resined his bow and with head thrown back and foot a-patting, played "Turkey in the Straw," "Arkansas Traveler," "Goodby, Old Paint," "Cotton-eyed Joe," and other such favorites. At frequent intermissions the dancers left the ballroom of the Russell Hotel while the dirt floors were sprinkled down and the fog of dust settled.<sup>15</sup>

Into Tascosa came the XIT cowboys to enjoy a little diversion. Here came Matlock, Boyce, and Findlay to look after syndicate business. Here they built a warehouse and stored supplies for the entire north half of the ranch.

Here to Tascosa came Murdo McKenzie, Manager of the extensive Matador Ranch interests, to secure a room at the little hotel. During the night, as the story goes, he heard several sixshooter shots. Jumping from bed he ran to the saloon in the same building. There a man lay upon the floor badly wounded, while two men knelt in a corner

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, March 24, 1888.

<sup>14</sup>Oldham County Commissioner Court *Records* I, December 26, 1882.

<sup>15</sup>E. C. G. Austen to J. E. H., July 7, 1927; Mrs. Dan Cole to J. E. H., July 7, 1927.

before a whiskey barrel, from which gurgled the contents through the hole made by a stray bullet. Mr. McKenzie called to them to know if the man was badly wounded and in need of help. "Hell yes," replied one in the corner, "but if we leave this barrel all the whiskey will waste."<sup>16</sup>

Here, too, Sam Dunn presided over his bar and filled the glasses for thirsty riders. Sam became involved in an argument which waxed with uncertainty until he set down his schooners with emphasis, referred warmly to a proverbially warm place, and drew from beneath the bar a copy of the *Christian Standard* to prove his contention.<sup>17</sup>

Itinerant preachers are said to have discoursed "scriptural logic,"<sup>18</sup> and though Tascosa never claimed the spiritual distinction of a church, preaching was sometimes heard in the courthouse. Announcing one such service the editor wrote: "It is among the probabilities that those who attend will be well entertained, and not unlikely even learn something. Sinners, it's us they're after."<sup>19</sup> However, Amarillo, growing from the open prairie to the southeast to claim the commercial prestige of which Tascosa had dreamed, soon started a church with a steeple, and even a bell.

The paper of June 12, 1886, announced that a Reverend Bloodworth had been in Tascosa "and preached . . . to small but respectful congregations." That night the boys of the city played a joke upon him. They sent a little chap to the hotel with a note for the preacher. "It contained the information that the boys had gotten up a dance and needed money to furnish liquor for the occasion. Would the gentleman donate a small sum to such a worthy cause?"

<sup>16</sup> Walter Farwell to J. E. H., September 21, 1927.

<sup>17</sup> James D. Hamlin to J. E. H., September 21, 1927.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, January 12, 1889.

<sup>19</sup> *The Pioneer*, March 10, 1888.

The editor, touched by a feeling of loyalty to the community and a fear that the wrong impression might go out, wrote in the same issue:

Society is not half so rough as many have been led to believe. It is true that there is probably more personal liberty to the square inch in the western Panhandle than in sections that boast an older settlement, and it is true that our social regulations have been guiltless of church or Sunday School. But in general the people of Tascosa and Oldham are wholehearted, social, and exceptionally civil. Law-breaking is the exception and not the rule.

One may wonder if his assertions were true. Much has been told of the big fight in Tascosa in which four men were killed. That event gave great notoriety to the little cow town and made a substantial addition to her "Boot Hill Grave Yard." Only twenty-six men were killed there during the first six years after the County was organized,<sup>20</sup> though a few did not wait upon that judicial preliminary. The assertion that two or three score men met their end without the consolation of clean sheets, but came to a sanguine death with their boots on, has been denounced as a baseless fabrication. When rumor reported the killing of a man in June of 1888, *The Pioneer* declared: "As a libel on a good moral town it was a success, for there hasn't been anybody even hurt here."<sup>21</sup>

An old trail driver once said of this little village:

I have been in the frontier towns from the Pecos to the Canadian line, and Tascosa was the best I have ever seen. In all the time that it was a frontier town a man was never robbed. . . . You could go into town, get as drunk as you pleased, have all your pockets full of money, and never be touched. Of course it was wide open but not mean."<sup>22</sup>

Hence the belief that Tascosa was at least as good as the

<sup>20</sup> James H. East, as cited.

<sup>21</sup> *The Pioneer*, June 16, 1888.

<sup>22</sup> J. E. May to J. E. H., June 29, 1926.

average frontier town and that the boast of the editor more than forty years ago, was sound.

Moralists may find strange ethics in the code whereby a man might brand a neighbor's calf or shoot a horse thief, but prevented his touching another's money. When, in the early days, the dinner bell rang at the Russell Hotel the gamblers left their money piled upon the table, the judge, lawyers, and jury filed down from the courthouse, if court happened to be in session, and the dance hall girls came in from their quarters, all to be seated and to eat at the same table.<sup>23</sup>

No history of Tascosa could be complete without a mention of her suburb. Most of the town lots were owned by Jule Howard and Jim McMasters, owners of a large general merchandise store. John Cone came in 1883 expecting to put in a store. Not caring for more competition, Howard and McMasters refused to sell a lot. Cone moved down the river less than half a mile and bought land from Romero. There Jess Jenkins came to put in a saloon and dance hall. His nickname was "Hoggie" and the place was called Hogtown in his honor. Soon the subdivision became a "restricted" one, limited to dance halls, saloons, and red lights. The sporting fraternity was kept below the hill, where Hogtown revelled by night and slept by day.<sup>24</sup>

Tascosa began to assume urban airs. As the county seat of Oldham County, the second to be organized in the Panhandle, she boasted in 1886 of her annual cash trade of \$200,000 to \$250,000. She claimed a doctor among her professional men, and among her business establishments were a millinery shop, a drug store, mercantile houses, and a book and news stand. Mickey McCormick, adept that he

<sup>23</sup> Harry Ingerton, as cited.

<sup>24</sup> James H. East, as cited; J. E. McAllister to J. E. H., July 1, 1926; Harry Ingerton to J. E. H., April 13, 1927.

was with cards, ran a livery stable. A saddle and boot shop was a prominent business. Besides these marks of advancement, Tascosa had a sign painter, a dairy, a hotel, a "bread establishment," a wagon yard, and "three barber chairs." Following this list the editor announced: "We will have one more saloon here shortly."<sup>25</sup> Greater prosperity loomed with the coming of the railroad, and in November of 1887 the significant caption appeared: "Seven Saloons, We Boom."<sup>26</sup> Such, in brief, was the economic status of Old Tascosa.

As a trade center she supplied the ranches as far west as New Mexico, north toward the North Palo Duro, east along the Canadian, and south toward Red River. Within this territory grazed in 1886 near a million head of cattle over ranges controlled principally by six or eight "outfits": The Capitol Freehold Land and Investment, The Reynolds Land and Cattle, the Lee-Scott, the Prairie, the American Pastoral, and the Cedar Valley Land and Cattle Companies.<sup>27</sup>

Thus there was not a great amount of business to attend to; but attending to one's own was conducive to personal security as well as profit. Witness a notice published in a western newspaper in the middle eighties:

Any person caught monkeying with any of my cattle without permission will catch h—l!

Yours in Christ,  
Grizzley Calleen.<sup>28</sup>

Tascosa grew and prospered for several years, but it died with the coming of the railroads. The Fort Worth and Denver was completed to Tascosa November 1, 1887, but

<sup>25</sup> *The Tascosa Pioneer*, June 12, 1886.

<sup>26</sup> *The Tascosa Pioneer*, June 12, 1886.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, June 12, 1886 and March 30, 1887.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, September 29, 1886.



instead of crossing the Canadian at the site of the town, it crossed a mile or more to the west.

While Tascosa was dying Henry B. Sanborn was giving away lots from the section east of the townsite to draw Amarillo upon his land;<sup>29</sup> a settlement named "Beer City" was springing up near the northern border,<sup>30</sup> and Sam Wise, the first sheriff of Randall County, was carrying the county's funds to Amarillo to deposit, only to lose them in a poker game before he found a banking establishment.<sup>31</sup> It was a time when John Haines, late LX cook, rented a horse at Boren and Turner's livery stable in Tascosa, rode over to Amarillo, sold it to Sheriff James Gober, and "skipped down the road";<sup>32</sup> a time when to see an electric light, to talk over a telephone, or to get water from a system of water works, the citizens of Northwest Texas were forced to go to Tascosa, because "no other Panhandle town had them."<sup>33</sup> Here Scotty (Alexander) Wilson, justice of the peace, once elected, held the office as long as he wished regardless of elective choice, because no one had the nerve to try to evict him. An offender was fined \$200 for disturbing Tascosa's peace by this same Scotty, and when the outraged defendant arose and said: "I'll take this case to a higher court," Scotty crushed him without mercy: "Sit down!" he shouted with an oath that reflected discredit upon the offender's ancestry, "Sit down: *There is no higher court.*"<sup>34</sup> But the newspaper reported on the justice's court thus: "Judge Scotty presided with his usual grace and dignity, and weighed out even justice in a case or two."<sup>35</sup>

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, September 8, 1888.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, May 26, 1888.

<sup>31</sup>Harry Ingerton to J. E. H., April 13, 1927.

<sup>32</sup>*The Pioneer*, October 15, 1887.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, December 15, 1888.

<sup>34</sup>Harry Ingerton, as cited.

<sup>35</sup>*The Pioneer*, October 13, 1888.



COMBINES CUT THE GRAIN TODAY



WHEN SYNDICATE LAND WAS FIRST OFFERED FOR SALE AROUND CHANNING, THE OLD RIVERS HOTEL WAS THE PRIDE OF THE COUNTRY 'ROUND

Half a century has passed since the first Mexicans settled in the valley of the Tascosa. The courthouse, for which the county went into debt forty-four years ago, has been converted into a ranch house. As such, it is not a part of Old Tascosa. Beneath the hill a rambling adobe stands as an unsteady monument to its builder and the founder of the town, Don Casimero Romero. It faces the river and the barren site of Hogtown.

In a crumbling adobe to the west of the creek lives an old woman, the last resident of Old Tascosa. She is dependent upon charity, and patiently waits for fate's last "deal." She has no company other than a little fox terrier and recollections of the frontier when Tascosa was alive and merry. She says that she has been urged to leave, but that she cannot, as over across the creek her husband was buried some fifteen years ago. "He was a gambler," she explained, and with unmistakable pride, that pride of the frontier in doing well whatever one does, she added, "and a good one."



## CHAPTER XIV

### *Then Came the Nester*

UPON the crest of the restless Western surge, far on the outer edge of settlement, the trader and trapper came first. After them, moving just before the fringe of settlements, then leaping far beyond following grass and water, the cowmen scattered their herds. Then from the east and north spread a mechanical frontier, and far-reaching rails betokened a changing day. Marching with tread more firm and determined than any other, moving in almost solid phalanxes across plain land and forging ahead along fertile river courses and railway lines, the agricultural frontier pushed into the West. In the eighties the granger, or nester, began claiming the West that hunter and cowboy had wrested from the wilderness. Many weed-grown fields and many shanties in ruin marked their first unsuccessful assaults upon the soil. "The phrase written on one disheartened farmer's wagon top, 'Going back to my wife's folks,' became historic."<sup>1</sup>

But still the nesters came afresh; they experimented with crops; they tried new methods; they combined stock raising with farming; they reclaimed the desert; they transformed the West. "The man with the hoe" was satisfying his hunger for land, and the Panhandle felt the force of that avidity. His coming had been anticipated.

One of the owners of the Capitol Lands gazed with pride

<sup>1</sup> See Emerson Hough, *The Passing of the Frontier*, 154.



upon their far-reaching swells in an early day, and enthusiastically exclaimed: "What a clean stretch of land! Why I could start a plowpoint into the soil at the south line and turn a furrow 200 miles long without a break—and I'll live to see the day when the plow will push the cattle off this range and grain crops will be fed to dairy cows!"<sup>2</sup>

That was prophecy!

At that time not a railroad touched the Panhandle of Texas. But the frontier of steel was pushing southwest from Kansas and northwest from "down in the skillet." Significant for this country are the dates of January 1, and March 14, 1888. Upon the first date into Panhandle City came the first scheduled train of the Southern Kansas Railway (the Santa Fe). Windy March was in full blast when the Fort Worth and Denver joined its two lines to span the Panhandle from southeast to northwest.<sup>3</sup>

Tascosa looked with confidence for the extension of the Rock Island into the Panhandle at this time. The road reached Liberal, Kansas, in May, and, in a month, from the "barren prairie" arose a town of 2,000 inhabitants, of four newspapers, of fifty hotels and restaurants, and of thirty real estate offices. "When the Rock Island hits the Panhandle," observed *The Pioneer*, "when Greek meets Greek, then look out all about you,"<sup>4</sup> for then "Tascosa will land there with both feet and her cotton hat and will take the name of Eli and will be the lion of the tribe of Judah—when the Rock Island comes. . . . Tascosa will sell more whiskey than for any previous two years in her history—when the Rock Island comes."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Crissey, "The Vanishing Ranges," as cited, 4.

<sup>3</sup> J. C. Paul to J. E. H., September 12, 1927; *The Tascosa Pioneer*, March 17, 1888.

<sup>4</sup> *The Tascosa Pioneer*, June 23, 1888.

<sup>5</sup> *The Pioneer*, November 17, 1888.

The Rock Island came—but in spite of the inducements offered by Tascosa, just forty years later.

The great land boom which raged in Kansas in 1886 was “deliberately devised” by the railroads partly because of the lands they owned, but mainly because of the prospective traffic of a granger population. They “preached steadily the doctrine of diversified farming” and did everything they could to promote prosperous settlement of the West.<sup>6</sup> In 1887 this boom reached Texas.

After reservation of the Capitol Lands had been provided for, A. W. Terrell introduced a bill in 1876 to provide for their sale to small purchasers “so that the humblest man might obtain an interest.”<sup>7</sup> For a state whose need for a capitol was urgent, nothing could have been more impractical. At the rate the Panhandle was settled, enough land might have been sold to have erected some sort of a building by 1910, but even that is doubtful. However, as has been said, the original plans of the Capitol Company pointed to immediate colonization. But the remoteness of the XIT lands and widespread skepticism as to their agricultural worth made immediate colonization impossible.<sup>8</sup> Then the advent of the railroads seemed to bring about the conditions toward which the owners had looked in the early eighties. But in spite of the favorable agencies, settlement moved slowly.

Contrary to belief, Panhandle cattlemen offered little opposition to settlement. In 1887 *The Pioneer* wrote:

Nobody is better aware than they that they must eventually give way for a multitude of smaller cattlemen and actual settlers. . . . The men who have large landed possessions . . . will vie with the state in disposing of them in small tracts and giving liberal terms to the purchasers.

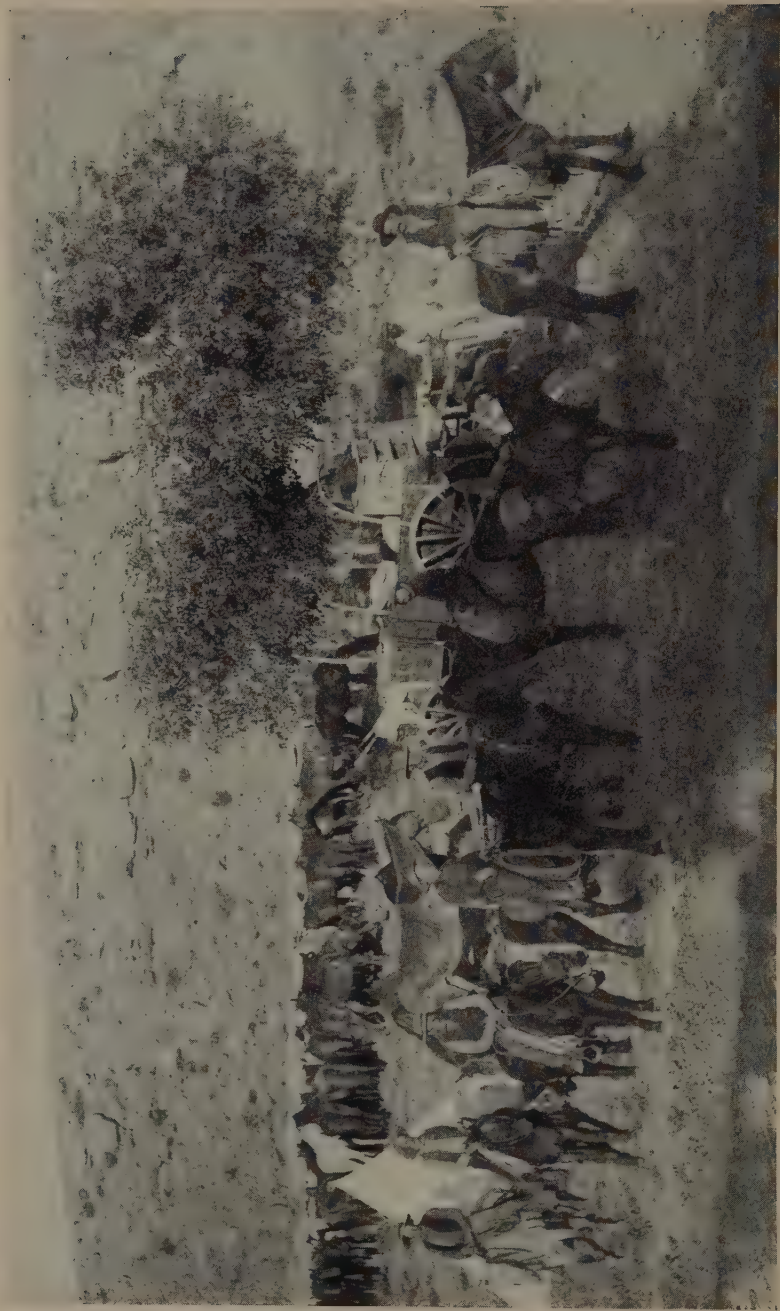
<sup>6</sup> Hough, *The Passing of the Frontier*, 154-155.

<sup>7</sup> *The Dallas Weekly Herald*, January 31, 1884.

<sup>8</sup> Gough, “Sketch of the History of the XIT Ranch,” 1, 2.



OJO BRAVO HEADQUARTERS WERE LOCATED ON A LONG SLOPE WHERE A SPRING OF FRESH WATER MADE THE  
SPOT FAVORABLE. THE LITTLE COTTONWOODS SYNDICATE COWBOYS PLANTED THERE FORTY YEARS AGO HAVE  
GROWN INTO MAGNIFICENT TREES



A REMARKABLE OLD RANGE PHOTOGRAPH MADE OF THE XIT WAGON ON THE GENERAL ROUNDUP IN NEW MEXICO IN 1888. RUCK TANNER WAS WAGON BOSS. THE XIT BRAND CAN BE SEEN ON THE CHUCK BOX AND ON THE OLD RED MULE THAT STANDS BACK OF THE WAGON EATING FROM A MORRAL



Cowmen realized that immigration enhanced land values.

The utilization of the Panhandle's wide domain . . . by the cattle interests for these past ten years [*The Pioneer* continued] has been properly matter for congratulation and praise. . . . [The cowmen] have redeemed the country from the Indians, thinned out wild beasts, paid the state an immense revenue, furnished employment to a large number of hands, and when the time comes to give place to the actual settlers, . . . they will be found surrendering their little kingdoms with a good grace. May the next phase of Panhandle life be as successfully and as wisely conducted.<sup>9</sup>

W. M. D. Lee, of the LS Ranch, urged his cowboys to file upon school land for their own use, "as he recognized that the grangers would soon be crowding in upon it, and he preferred to see the boys get in a chance at it, too."<sup>10</sup> The Panhandle Stock Association, under the guidance of such men as O. H. Nelson, Dick McNuty, Hank Cresswell, and Charles Goodnight, did much to prevent that traditional animosity between the nester and the cowman in the Panhandle. "As an association we favored the settler or nester," said O. H. Nelson. If he was an honest "law and order man," he was made welcome. "We extended the same protection to good citizen nesters that we did to stockmen, realizing that we needed them for the development of the country. This is the principal reason why we had no fence cutting or other lawless or mob acts."<sup>11</sup> The Association member with one cow was entitled to the same protection given the big cowman, the inspectors served his interests with equal care, and the Association attorneys fought his legal battles.<sup>12</sup> Only a few instances of opposition to settlement marred this general friendliness to granger infiltration.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *The Pioneer*, March 30, 1887.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, November 3, 1886.

<sup>11</sup> *The Southwest Plainsman* (Amarillo), February 20, 1926.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Goodnight to J. E. H., June 25, 1925.

<sup>13</sup> *The Pioneer*, October 15 and November 12, 1887.



In connection with the unjust charges of intimidation of settlers by the big companies, the fact that the largest one began agricultural experimentation before there was a railroad nearer than one hundred and fifty miles is significant. Contemporary with the coming of the first Longhorns was the breaking of the first sod upon the XIT Ranch. A small plot was plowed at Buffalo Springs in 1885, and, though planting was not done until late, a fair crop of corn and millet came to maturity before the frosts fell. Two hundred acres of grass were turned under the next spring, thirty more at Middle Water, and seventy at the Yellow House. An unusually dry season dragged on until July, but a fall crop followed. John V. Farwell reported to the Trustees in 1886 that the land had "successfully produced maize, oats, alfalfa, millet, and sorghum . . ." He saw in the results abundant promise of successful stock-farming.<sup>14</sup>

At the divisional headquarters each foreman kept weather observations. Reports of the rainfall and average temperature were made to the general headquarters upon the first of each month.<sup>15</sup> Five thousand trees of various kinds set out at Buffalo Springs constituted another step of experimentation.<sup>16</sup> At the same time the Syndicate was demonstrating the practicability of the use of windmills for water supply.<sup>17</sup>

In 1887 the Syndicate sent an exhibit of truck and farm products to the Dallas State Fair. From a two-acre patch at Buffalo Springs, 4,500 cabbages, thirty bushels of onions, fifty of beets, three barrels of pickles, and much other garden truck was produced. "Such a crop as this," a writer claimed, "from so limited an area is proof sufficient of the fertility of the plains soil . . ." <sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> John V. Farwell, *Report*, as cited, 1886, p. 6.

<sup>15</sup> Gough, "Sketch of the XIT Ranch," 3.

<sup>16</sup> Farwell, *Report*, as cited, 6, 7.

<sup>17</sup> Gough, "Sketch," as cited, 7.

<sup>18</sup> *The Pioneer*, November 12, 1887.

The next spring R. A. Cameron, Commissioner of Immigration for the Fort Worth and Denver road, announced: "We propose to advertise [the Panhandle] extensively in the east and seek to settle our line by colonization." An irrigated farm for demonstration was proposed on the Canadian.<sup>19</sup> The Southern Kansas Railway was active, but citizens had to petition that trains carrying prospectors enter the Panhandle by a daylight schedule so that immigrants could see what manner of country they traversed.<sup>20</sup> A. L. Matlock attended an immigration meeting at Fort Worth in December, 1887, where four towns of this section were represented. Within about two months the Panhandle Immigration Convention met at Canadian.<sup>21</sup> Judge W. B. Plemons urged all counties to "send full delegates," and Tascosa's editor, convention-wise as he must have been, wrote that "at least if the delegates are not sent 'full' they will proceed to do their whole duty in that direction when they 'get thar.'" <sup>22</sup>

County organizations were being formed, and on April 12, 1888, the Oldham County Immigration Association was organized with James McMasters as president. The Association felt that the Panhandle would support 1,000,000 people. Already, the Association claimed, the country had a substantial beginning in its total population of only a "little less than five thousand, when everybody is counted . . . ." To increase this number the Association advocated cooperation with the Panhandle Association, with large landholders, and with the immigration bureaus of the railroads. Not absolute dependence upon tillage of the soil, but a combination of farming and stock raising was urged.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, April 14, 1888.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, March 14, 1888.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, February 11, 1888.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, February 18, 1888.

Sound reasoning is found in an editorial addressed to the Panhandle Immigration Convention.

The immigrant we want is the man with . . . from five hundred to five thousand dollars; the man who will roll up his sleeves and produce something; the man who will take his section or his two or four sections and grow stock on them, grasses, feed, sorghum, forage and some grain; who will have his family here, his home here, his interests here; who possesses and will apply real energies. . . . What we want is a development of productive possibilities, . . . an attention to those twin industries of farming and live stock raising . . . which would give the Panhandle an unexampled prosperity . . . we want . . . to encourage . . . immigration, not of city people, not of professional men, for they can come afterwards, but our efforts should reach the populous rural districts of the states north and east, and we will get the population that we want.<sup>23</sup>

Indicative of the interest being felt in Northwest Texas were inquiries as to land pouring in from different sections, from Missouri, Georgia, Arkansas, Virginia, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Illinois, Indiana, Dakota, and other states.<sup>24</sup>

"Men with hoes" were coming. Suggestive of Schopenhauerian cynicism, the editor of Oldham County wrote, June 2, 1888; "A half dozen immigrant wagons, loaded with women, tow-headed progeny and other plunder, passed through yesterday morning. . . ." His phrasing was an example of frontier journalism, flavored by a touch of humor. Another week brought another paragraph.

"Wagons and wagons with white tops, rope-bottomed chairs, tow-heads, brindle cows, yellow dogs and a pervading air of restlessness have poured through this week in the direction suggested by Horace Greeley. . . ." <sup>25</sup>

Scattered farms were being opened in all portions of the Panhandle,<sup>26</sup> and settlements were growing apace. By

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, February 18, 1888.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, December 24, 1887; January 14; January 28; February 11, 1888.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, June 9, 1888.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, December 24, 1887.

March of 1888 "a good settlement" was reported in Randall County, "a nucleus" was in Deaf Smith, "a colony was about to be poured into Hartley from Illinois," many people" were locating in Potter, while Hansford and Sherman Counties were receiving a few new settlers.<sup>27</sup> Two Farwell cities existed at one time. One was in Hansford County, but that on the Fort Worth and Denver secured a post office as Farwell Park.<sup>28</sup> The name was in demand. When J. J. Hagerman built his railroad south and west from Amarillo to tap the Pecos Valley of New Mexico, Farwell, the capital of Parmer County, arose by the state line to contest the supremacy of its sister village, Texico. Amarillo made an unpretentious beginning in July of 1887, to be the competitor of Tascosa, to be the bone of contention between rival townsites companies, and to be shot up by the cowboys to the delight of Tascosa.<sup>29</sup>

Texline, in the northwestern portion of the XIT, came to life and notice in the fall of 1888 when it was chosen as a division point of the Denver Road. Rapid growth was therefore expected, also because the Syndicate was fostering it, and because it was located near New Mexico, the Neutral Strip, and Colorado. Its rising sun gave promise, and in the roseate hues crimson was not lacking, as a description of 1888 will show. "Some predict," said the *Tascosa Pioneer*,

"That it will be the biggest and the best and the fastest and the hardest and the busiest and the wildest and the roughest and the toughest town in this section. They've already had to station the Texas rangers there—and when that's said enough's said."<sup>30</sup>

Above eighty thousand acres of land nearby were cut

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, March 17, 1888.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, September 29, 1888.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, July 16, 1887.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, October 20, 1888.

into farming tracts in the Spring of 1890. Matlock was communicating with an outside immigration agency looking toward the establishment of a colony of immigrant farmers upon the land, and indicated that the Syndicate had plans of selling its entire range in such wise as soon as a demand might be created.<sup>31</sup>

Counties were being organized, and no longer could Tascosa claim to be "the Capital of the western Panhandle." The land-boomer and promoter were numerous, spreading afar the superior advantages of the spots they settled upon, all "future metropolises." Newspapers, usually of few days and abundant trouble, flared forth with and for each new town. Unique among them was the first Panhandle daily. Upon the staff head of the *Amarillo Northwest* was this statement: "Published every day and Sunday." In the second issue the editor wrote: "It's probable that *The Northwest* is here to stay." It stayed one week.<sup>32</sup> Scarcely less novel was the *Rivers Hummer*, published at the little town of Rivers upon the northern breaks of the Canadian, which town soon became known as Channing, and the general headquarters of the XIT. Upon the front page was the salutatory, upon the back, the valedictory.<sup>33</sup> With one printing it died a natural death. At the home of the *Hummer*, Syndicate land was placed upon sale through R. W. Priest.<sup>34</sup> Foreign capital, not altogether discouraged by the losses of the middle eighties, was still interested in this part of the Southwest. *The Pioneer* of May 12, 1888, declared: "A whole half-dozen . . . blarsted Britishers . . . have . . . been looking over the Panhandle with a view to purchasing the rest of it."<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, March 15, 1890.

<sup>32</sup>*The Amarillo Northwest*, December 25, 1889 to January 1, 1890.

<sup>33</sup>*The Pioneer*, January 3, 1891.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, January 24, 1891.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, May 12, 1888.



Thus extensive efforts were being made to attract the granger from beyond the state's lines. But the editors of that delightfully intimate period of journalism did not over-look home potentialities. A pre-nursery editor wrote in a special column of his paper:

IT IS COMMON TALK

That the laying in of a line of baby carriages by our merchants is a pointer as to the gradually changing order of our population and indicates that it is generally understood whither we are drifting.<sup>36</sup>

Such observations indicated that the Panhandle was changing from a land of men to one of men and women; that it was gradually laying aside the predominant masculinity of pioneering. This meant the growth of settlement.

Many of the first settlers were forced to move out because of crop failures. Some gathered the scattered buffalo bones, hauled them to the railroads, and sold them for fertilizer. Some were able to supplement the returns from scanty crops by freighting for the large ranches.<sup>37</sup>

With the early nineties came seasons of extreme drought, and many of the nesters turned their wagon tongues to the East, cursing the West and the man who painted it "golden." What terrible parody was this upon *The Tascosa Pioneer's* sanguine but prophetic editorial of January 28, 1888.

Come to the Panhandle for cheap lands; come for rich and productive soil; come for health; come for seasonable summers and balmy winters; come and raise cereals, fruits, vegetables, sorghum, grains, grasses and forage; come and raise cattle, horses, mules, sheep, hogs, goats or poultry; come and manufacture cheese, butter and tallow; come and open factories, banks, colleges, mills, stores, agencies, and the like; come

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, March 31, 1888.

<sup>37</sup>Mabry, "Recollection," as cited, 7, 8.

prepared to make your home with us and lands, openings and opportunities of one kind and another will not be wanting. For there is no longer such another country as the Panhandle awaiting development, and no such country destined to the same degree and rapidity of development. Come, and come now.

Skeptics of such visions felt sure of their point of view now. Never would the Plains of Texas be fit for anything but open range, they said. Yet with the opening decade of the new century the Capitol Reservation Lands became the sites of farms and towns.



## CHAPTER XV

### *Law Suits, Land Sales, Colonization*

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NOT all troubles relating to the management of a ranch grow out of blizzards, predatory animals, bad men, and cattle rustlers. The Syndicate engaged in two law suits of considerable significance.

Amos C. Babcock, a member of the Company when the contract for building the capitol was assumed, continued to be a minor shareholder until his death. His wife, executrix of the estate, and Morris K. Brown brought suit against the Farwells and the Capitol Freehold Land and Investment Company, Limited, on behalf of all the minor stockholders.<sup>1</sup> On July 23, 1901, the suit was filed, charging that the Farwells were using the ranch for the promotion of their personal interests, to the detriment of the minority stockholders.

Through the District Judge, H. H. Wallace, of Amarillo, sitting in Hartley County, they secured the appointment of receivers for the ranch property. Judge Wallace, evidently ignorant of the law governing such cases, made the appointment without notifying the Company that was in possession of the ranches under lease from the Syndicate. Immediately upon discovering that a receivership had been granted, the Syndicate took steps to appeal from Judge Wallace's order. The Farwells arranged to make super-

<sup>1</sup> *Southwestern Reporter*, Vol. 65, p. 510.

sedias bond in the amount of several million dollars, which they expected would be demanded upon such a valuable piece of property as the XIT Ranch. But Wallace set the bond at \$25,000. The receivers joined the fight to maintain the order, and the case was bitterly fought in Amarillo, where partisanship ran riot.<sup>2</sup>

The receivers decided, before the appeal came to trial, that they had the right to take possession of the ranch. Mr. Charles F. Harding, a present trustee of the Capitol Reservation Lands, gives this account of their attempt.

One of the receivers met Manager Boyce upon the street at Channing and said that he had come over to take possession. Mr. Boyce told him that the custody of the property had been given him by the Farwells, and that any attempt to take it from him except on their order would result seriously. A little later the receivers went to the ranch offices, to demand and take possession of the books and papers kept there in the safe. Mr. Boyce saw them coming. He closed the safe, locked it, and leaned his Winchester up against the door. Two of his boys were present, and other guns were within reach. The receivers appeared and made their demand. Mr. Boyce answered:

"Don't go near that safe or touch anything else in this office. I do not propose to surrender anything. Any attempts you make will be resisted, and force will be met by force."

The receivers retired. Then Mr. Boyce consulted the Company's counsel in Fort Worth. They advised that his conduct had been correct, as well as in keeping with good old western tradition.<sup>3</sup>

The appeal from Judge Wallace's order was carried to the Court of Civil Appeals at Fort Worth, where the receivership was declared void. Thus "the Receivership Fight" ended to the advantage of the XIT, and cleared the management of unjust charges.

In 1918 another big suit was forced upon the Capitol Syndicate. It so happens that many of the Texas land

<sup>2</sup> William Boyce to J. E. H., June 28, 1927; Charles F. Harding, Ms., "The Receivership Fight," (Chicago Office).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

surveys are from two to four per cent in excess of the stipulated areas. These surveys were made by the state and disposed of by sale, endowment, grant, and otherwise. The state knew, in patenting the land to Abner Taylor, in 1887, that there were errors in J. T. Munson's survey, making the Capitol Tract in excess of 3,000,000 acres.<sup>4</sup> Other surveys in the state ran to excesses in double the percentage of the Capitol Tract, but such errors did not affect the validity of the survey, nor mar the title in selling. No attempt was made to rectify the errors in the survey of the Capitol Tract, and all the land was patented to the Syndicate.

Rediscovering this error, the state brought suit and contended that the contract was for the sale of the land, not by the tract, but by the acre, and that the state's officers had no right to convey more than 3,000,000 acres. Therefore, it contended that conveyances of land in excess of this amount was not binding upon the state, which was entitled to relief in the amount of excess acreage. The state decided, by its second attempt at survey, that the excess was 57,840.5 acres, not quite two per cent, and less than the average excess in other surveys for the state as a whole. And the surveyor, besides admitting errors in his own figures, could not testify in what particular leagues the excess occurred.<sup>5</sup>

By the time the suit was brought the Syndicate had disposed of the larger portion of the original three million acres to firms and individuals, who bought, in good faith, and patented directly to the sellers by the state. The Syndicate by the operation of the statutes of limitation, was unable to recover this excess in the land that it had sold. But the state contended that *it* had the right to recover the total excess acreage—which, it admitted, the Company had

<sup>4</sup> Ms., "The litigation by the State of Texas over the Capitol Grant in the Panhandle," 18, (Chicago Office).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.



never owned—from the small portion of the original tract which remained unsold, thus affirming all the sales made by the defendants to other parties.<sup>6</sup> Many minds were baffled to know upon what principle the recovery, by the state, of 57,840.5 acres from a small portion of the Capitol Grant, could rectify the titles to all the other portions already sold. But the District Court of Travis County knew that it would, and decreed the recovery of 27,613.6 acres in Dallam and 30,226.9 acres in Hartley Counties to cover the excess of land granted in ten counties.<sup>7</sup> The Capitol Syndicate held the land recovered by the state for over thirty years. It placed improvements upon the land and was paying into the state taxes upon property which would otherwise have been yielding little.<sup>8</sup>

In the meantime Colonel A. G. Boyce, who had been the General Manager of the XIT for eighteen years, retired from the trying work. In his place came H. S. Boice, who once ran cattle in the Dakotas with Berry-Boice Cattle Company. He was later a partner in the Kansas City Live Stock Commission Company. He came to the ranch with a wide knowledge of the cattle business from almost every angle, and his executive ability proved of value to the Company in handling and closing out the last of the great herd intrusted to his care. He was a unique character in the rough and ready life of the cattle range. He did not smoke, drink, or indulge in profanity. He said his prayers every night, no matter who was present. But he was a man of force, and his orders were carried out with dispatch.

Upon November 1, 1912, the remnant of the XIT herds

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 22-23.

<sup>7</sup>*Abstract of Title*, "Capitol Reservation Lands," 37.

<sup>8</sup>In the late nineties the Syndicate was annually paying approximately \$37,000 in taxes. Gough, "Sketch" as cited, 7.

was sold to Dave Trigg and John Shelton. At the Mojares (*mujeres*, women), 3,500 steers were turned over, and the final brandings were done at Romero, Perico, Buffalo Springs, and the Bull Pasture. The total number was 13,560 head, "yearlings and up," and about 8,000 calves which were not counted. The land was leased to the same parties for five and one-half years.

The redemption of bonds when due, to some extent, forced the sale of much of the land in large tracts. That remaining was held for farming and stock-farming purposes. In 1901 portions of the tract were placed upon sale. Since there was not sufficient demand for farming land, large tracts were sold to cattlemen, and the money thus received was applied toward the payment of bonds and the development of that property which was left. In July of 1901 George W. Littlefield bought 235,858½ acres of the Yellow House division. From the Bovina division, a few days later, J. E. and J. W. Rhea bought 49,514 acres, and before the close of the year Charles E. Harding bought 17,730 acres. W. E. Halsell bought 184,155 acres of the Yellow House and Spring Lake lands, and north of the Canadian, E. L. Halsell and Thomas S. Hutton bought 150,646 acres. The Matador interests started their operations along the Canadian west of Amarillo with the purchase of 198,732 acres in June of 1902, at the price of \$2.40 an acre.<sup>9</sup> During the same year Wm. J. Todd and F. D. Wight bought a total of 136,560 acres in the Buffalo Springs country. These sales were handled by Colonel Boyce, J. Henry Stephens, and William Boyce.

Following these heavy sales to cattlemen, the Company directed its interest toward colonization. A number of causes contributed toward making the time propitious for

<sup>9</sup> Maps of XIT Lands, Dalhart Office; H. F. Mitchell to J. E. H., June 10, 1927.

such work. In other sections of the Panhandle the available school land was being taken up rapidly. Farm lands in the North had so advanced in price as to make their purchase prohibitive for any but men of means, and prospectors were anxious to get cheap lands. The possibility of the enhancement of values, caused by further settlement, was an inducement to some buyers.<sup>10</sup> The Company used this very legitimate argument to advantage in promoting sales, but buying for speculative reasons alone hurt the sales in later years. About this time outside immigration agencies centered their attention upon Texas. Beginning about 1900 the Canadian railroads and government extensively advertised the "free wheat lands" of Alberta and Saskatchewan. In one season this campaign for immigration took away more than 150,000 young farmers from the middle-western states. "In one year the state of Iowa lost over fifteen million dollars of money withdrawn from bank deposits by farmers moving across the line into Canada."<sup>11</sup>

By 1905 capitalists, railroads, and statesmen of this country began an attempt to check this immigration, and keep these farmers in the United States. "Then was the time when a good many newspapers discovered Texas in general and the Panhandle in particular. The railroads and the newspapers spread the news of the coming-out party of the Panhandle, and it became quite an event in immigration circles." It was enough of an event to enable the Company to sell about 800,000 acres in tracts from one hundred and sixty to six hundred and forty acres in extent. Since these averaged about 200 acres, it was plain that the land was being bought for agricultural purposes.<sup>12</sup>

With the approach of another land boom in the Pan-

<sup>10</sup> *Land Booklet*, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Hough, *The Passing of the Frontier*, 169-170.

<sup>12</sup> Crissey, "The Vanishing Range," 4.

handle the speculators swarmed in. At first the Company "had too much land . . . to do business on a retail basis, and therefore most of its sales were of a wholesale character to land and development companies."<sup>13</sup>

In 1904 the Company granted to George H. Heafford of Chicago, Hardy W. Campbell of Lincoln, and Charles E. Wantland of Salt Lake City, an option for the purchase of large bodies of land in Parmer and Dallam Counties. The organization which these men formed was later known as the Farm Land Development Company. They paid from \$2.50 to \$6.00 an acre for this land with liberal terms. The next large contract was made July 5, 1906, with W. W. Ryan, an associate of George G. Wright of Kansas City, who purchased 176,814.35 acres at prices ranging from \$5 to \$6. This land, and additional tracts bought by Wright, lay in the Escarbada and Spring Lake country, a long distance from the railroad. About the same time C. E. Tuttle contracted for 34,823.05 acres, title to which was taken by Ben I. Tanner. Late in December of 1906 Milton Rice and Frank W. Gates purchased 26,976.99 acres at \$4.50. Minor purchases were made by Lewis Hines, J. F. Edwards, Frank F. Loomis, W. P. Soash Land Company, and the Western Land and Immigration Company.<sup>14</sup>

These development companies began selling to small buyers. They brought in prospectors by the train load, imbued them with the agricultural prospects of the country, and a desire to buy. Soash started a town on the Fort Worth and Denver, between Dalhart and Texline, and called it Ware. He built a hotel for the accommodation of his prospectors, went back to Iowa and other of the corn belt states, and brought in special trains loaded with real

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup>J. F. Heissler to Samuel H. Roberts, March 27, 1928.

farmers. But they bought for speculation, and then most of them returned to their homes.<sup>15</sup>

"Big Ed" Connell, of Hereford, ex-Texas Ranger and Syndicate cowboy, after several years chasing rustlers, got into the real estate business. In 1906 he carried George G. Wright out for an inspection of Syndicate land, and later described his sales.

I never saw anything to equal Wright's organization. He shipped down a lot of automobiles for use in showing his prospectors around. He would unload five and six hundred prospectors at a time, most of whom were from Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Oklahoma and Missouri. I don't think he sold any land to men who did not see it, but I don't think he ever tried to sell to one who did not buy. Wright paid five dollars an acre for this first land and paid his agents five and six dollars for selling it. It was sold at twenty-five dollars an acre. Besides additional options from the Syndicate, Wright bought 100,000 acres from Bill Halsell at Spring Lake, four leagues from C. F. Harding, and 80,000 acres from Tom Kelly. He sold every acre of this in a little over two years and must have cleared a million dollars on it.<sup>16</sup>

The results of this land policy were, however, not satisfactory to the Company. Most of the purchases were made by non-residents, many of whom were not farmers, but bankers and capitalists, who bought with no intention of settling upon the land. As a consequence, the Company created the office of Land Commissioner.

F. W. Wilsey was the first to hold the place. The land was turned over to him for sale. He began work in 1905, and made a great success in his efforts. He was succeeded by Hoyt King in 1909. King held the place until November, 1910,<sup>17</sup> when his office was taken by Garret A. Dobbin. Dobbin was Commissioner until December 31, 1913. The office was discontinued for some time, and on November 16, 1914, F. W. Wilsey, having finished some work he was

<sup>15</sup> R. L. Duke to J. E. H., November 8, 1927.

<sup>16</sup> Ed Connell to J. E. H., October 31, 1927.

<sup>17</sup> J. F. Heissler to Samuel H. Roberts, as cited.





FRANCIS C. FARWELL, TRUSTEE



ARTHUR L. FARWELL, MEMBER, SALES & VALUATION COMMITTEE

doing for railroads, was re-employed as Sales Manager. Succeeding him, Fay W. Clark was appointed Land Commissioner and served until March 1, 1917, just one year, after which the office remained vacant for several years.<sup>18</sup>

In 1900 the young law firm of William Boyce and James D. Hamlin, of Amarillo, was representing the Capitol Syndicate as Texas Counsel. Upon Wilsey's appointment as Land Commissioner in 1905, he engaged Judge Hamlin as Resident Representative of the owners, with headquarters at the newly established town of Farwell. Judge Hamlin was interested primarily in retailing Syndicate lands to actual settlers, and the sale and development of the town-sites of Bovina and Farwell. This sales organization, which has been maintained for over twenty-two years at Farwell, through all the changes in Land Commissioners and during vacancies in that office, has carried on the Company's most sustained colonization work, having retailed over 200,000 acres of land. Besides being the personal representative of the owners of the land during this time, Judge Hamlin has served twelve years as Judge of Parmer County. The Syndicate and Capitol Reservation Lands, under his direction in selling, has practically settled and developed Parmer County, as well as considerable portions of those counties adjoining.

Samuel H. Roberts, formerly House Attorney for the John V. Farwell Company, was sent to Texas in 1926 to assume the work of General Land Commissioner. He located in Amarillo as the tremendous oil and gas development was moving toward its peak. Though most of the oil "play" has been as far away as the second tier of counties east of those in which Syndicate land lies, considerable exploration or "wildcatting" has taken place upon the

<sup>18</sup> J. F. Heissler to Samuel H. Roberts, as cited.

Capitol Lands. Roberts leased approximately 180,000 acres, realizing for the owners about \$250,000.00 in money and an equal amount in drilling tests. Leases were made principally to Companies such as the Humble, Gulf, Amerada, Marland, Pure, California, and Phillips. Five tests, each to a depth of at least 3,500 feet, were made, but no definite oil or gas traces were found. Since gas was found east of Channing, and oil showing north and southeast of Dallam County and west of Parmer County, further explorations will probably take place. In 1927 clay deposits were uncovered near Texline on Perico Creek. Preliminary examinations indicate that these may be valuable commercially for making fire brick, building blocks, tile roofing and other clay products.<sup>19</sup>

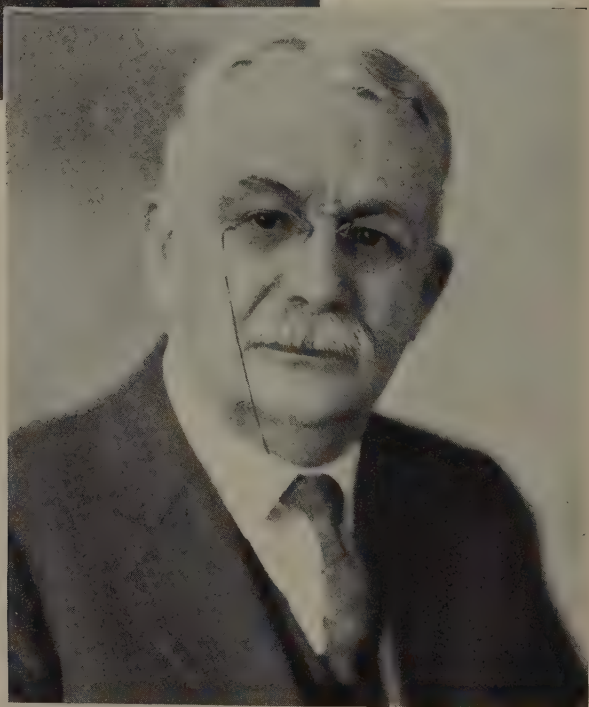
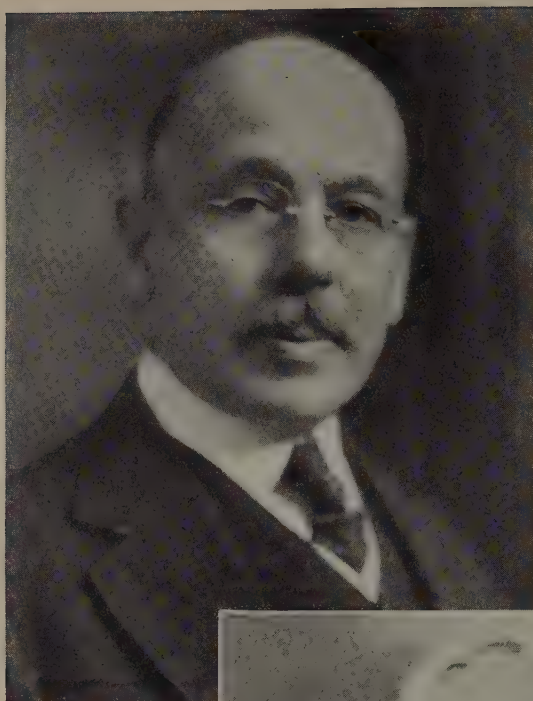
The prospecting for oil and gas had very little effect upon the price and movement of Capitol fee land, although a small percent was temporarily taken off the market. The Amarillo office under Mr. Roberts has, contemporaneously with the oil boom, and since, been co-operating with the other selling forces in pressing the sale of land for farm and ranch purposes. Present colonization work includes a Mennonite Colony at Coldwater, a new agricultural settlement in the northern part of Dallam County. E. E. Hartshorn, after ten years on Judge Hamlin's staff in Parmer County, is salesman of the farming land at Coldwater. A. L. Schellenberg, editor of the Mennonite paper at Hillsboro, Kansas, is the leader in this work among his own people. R. L. Duke of Dalhart, who has been connected with the ranch many years, is interested in the sale of grazing lands on the north end of the old tract and is Overseer of the property there. Judge James D. Hamlin still maintains his organization at Farwell for the disposition

<sup>19</sup> Samuel H. Roberts to J. E. H., April 17, 1928.



FARWELL WINSTON, MEMBER, SALES & VALUATION COMMITTEE





FREDERICK E. FRENCH, MANAGING TRUSTEE; CHARLES F. HARDING, TRUSTEE

of lands to actual settlers. He has with him J. C. Temple, W. L. Mansfield, C. M. Presley, S. T. Lawrence, C. R. Smith, and H. Y. Overstreet, most of whom have served many years in the selling and settlement of the South End lands. During May and June 1928, land sales were active. About 62,000 acres of Hartley and Oldham County grazing land sold to Julian Bivins and the Matador Land and Cattle Company, Limited, brought approximately \$475,000.<sup>20</sup>

In the Coldwater district sales are progressing steadily. Probably within a few more years the remaining 460,000 acres, principally owned by the Farwell Estate, composed of John V. Farwell, Francis C. Farwell, Arthur L. Farwell, Walter Farwell, Mrs. Abby Farwell Ferry, Mrs. Henry N. Tuttle, Mrs. Robert G. McGann, Mrs. Reginald deKoven and heirs of Mrs. Hobart C. Chatfield-Taylor, will be sold and settled. Then the last record book kept by the Company, as the last trail followed by an XIT cow, will be a matter of history.

That which remains of the old Capitol Grant is held by a trust known as the Capitol Reservation Lands, the legal title of which rests in three Trustees, Francis C. Farwell, Charles F. Harding and Frederick E. French. Mr. French was credit manager of the John V. Farwell Company for many years. In January, 1927, he came to the place made vacant by George Findlay's death. Scotland never contributed a more zealous worker to the western range country than Mr. Findlay. He came to the John V. Farwell Company as a stripling in 1874. With the first acquisition of the Capitol Grant his life's work began. From then until the time of his death, nearly half a century, he "devoted his splendid talents and all his time to the Texas Estate,

<sup>20</sup> Samuel H. Roberts to J. E. H., June 8, 1928.

during the years it was operated as a cattle ranch and subsequently in the management and disposal of the lands. His high character as a man and his loyalty to the interests of his principals entitled him to the confidence and affection which they bestowed upon him." No man was so intimately connected with the development of the Capitol Lands.<sup>21</sup>

Upon the organization of the Capitol Reservation Lands, June 4, 1915, the Capitol Freehold Land and Investment Company went out of existence.<sup>22</sup> The affairs of this trust are in the hands of the Trustees, and an advisory board made up of John V. Farwell, Arthur L. Farwell, and Farwell Winston. This board is generally known as the Sales and Valuation Committee.<sup>23</sup>

The results of the change in policy, from sales to non-settlers to the actual colonization work of the Capitol Reservation Lands through a Land Commissioner, have proved very satisfactory to the owners. At Farwell, Texline, and Channing, hotels were built for the convenience of home-seekers. One is now maintained at Coldwater, and another east of Bovina in Parmer County. Modern farm homes have been and are being built by the Company and are sold at actual cost with the land. From the first, liberal terms have been given. In 1903 land could be bought with ten percent cash payments, and the remainder in nine annual notes with six percent interest. Present terms of sale require payment of one-fifth cash, and the remainder in eight equal payments covering virtually ten years. The rate of interest remains the same. In opening settlements,

<sup>21</sup> James D. Hamlin to J. E. H., June 14, 1928.

<sup>22</sup> Samuel H. Roberts to J. E. H., March 20, 1928.

<sup>23</sup> Others intimately acquainted with the Capitol Reservation Lands: Francis W. Farwell, 1886-1926, Joseph F. Heissler, 1906-, Mrs. Nora G. Seifried, 1906-, Miss Elizabeth S. McFarlane, 1920-, Mrs. Alice L. Marks, 1925-. These are connected with the Chicago Office.

the custom of granting the buyer of agricultural lands an option upon an adjoining tract of equal acreage has proven a great inducement to men of small means.<sup>24</sup> Usually, after the first payment, the only way for the Company to get its money is for the farmer to take it from the land at the point of his plow. The Company has never foreclosed upon a settler who was attempting to make his land productive, but has "carried" some for many years. Others have paid their land out in two or three years. Much money is loaned farmers for improvements. For some time an experiment farm and nursery have been maintained at Farwell, from which shrubs and shade trees are furnished settlers, without charge. A demonstration farm is now operated at Coldwater by C. C. Nickel. It is doubtful if the representatives of any other company have manifested a more generous, human interest in the people who have settled its land. The Company has been a colonizer, not an exploiter.<sup>25</sup>

The growth of the country has been rapid. In 1885 no railroad reached within one hundred and fifty miles of the Capitol Reservation. But the Fort Worth and Denver soon came, the Pecos Valley and Northeastern (assumed by the Santa Fe), and then the Rock Island. At present the Panhandle-Plains Country is the scene of the greatest rail building activity in the United States. In 1887 there were less than two thousand people in the Panhandle, and only a very small percent of this number was upon the XIT Ranch. The drouths of 1891 to 1893 were a serious set-back to immigration, but the tide flowed again in the late nineties. Though immigration was steady in 1904 and 1905, few actual settlers bought Capitol land until after 1906, and not until 1913 and 1914 did such sales get well under way.

<sup>24</sup> *Land Booklet*; Samuel H. Roberts to J. E. H., as cited.

<sup>25</sup> James D. Hamlin to J. E. H., September 22, 1927.

Sales continued until 1918, when the state brought suit for the recovery of excess acreage. All lands were withdrawn from sale and held off the market until May 1924, by which time the case had been fought through the state supreme court. The disposal of land from that time to the present, though not spectacular, has been rather steady. The Census of 1900, placed the population of the Capitol Reservation at 778. Recent estimates of the population place the number at 46,000.

But the record is not all in. With its adaptability to grain and forage crops, the Panhandle-Plains Country should experience tremendous development in stock farming and dairying. Across the fences from fields of kaffir, maize, and wheat, the cowboy still rides the breaks country and pulls bog along the Canadian. Oil derricks, in proven territory, rise as a forest above the Plains, and cities of thousands spring up in a very few months over hills where coyotes lately raised their whelps.<sup>26</sup> The past fifty years have been fruitful ones for the Panhandle of Texas, the growth of which is due, in no small part, to its pioneer cowmen.

In the western Panhandle the XIT Ranch suppressed outlawry after a fight of years. It paid hundreds of thousands of dollars to the state in taxes. It utilized, by windmills and tanks, land which would otherwise have remained idle for some time. It furnished employment for many men. It expended millions of dollars in the development of the Capitol Grant. In building up a high grade herd of 150,000 head of cattle, it helped establish the Panhandle's reputation for fine stock. By systematic experimentation it early proved this area suited to agriculture, and then began to

<sup>26</sup> The site of Borger was bald prairie until March 8, 1926. Within five months 25,000 people swarmed its hills and canyons. One year after the town started a drug store carried the advertisement across its front; "We broke dirt when the coyotes howled on main street."





LAND SALES ORGANIZATION: JAMES D. HAMLIN, SAMUEL H. ROBERTS,  
R. L. DUKE



EXPERIMENT FARM AT COLDWATER



CAPITOL RESERVA-  
TION HOTEL AT  
COLDWATER



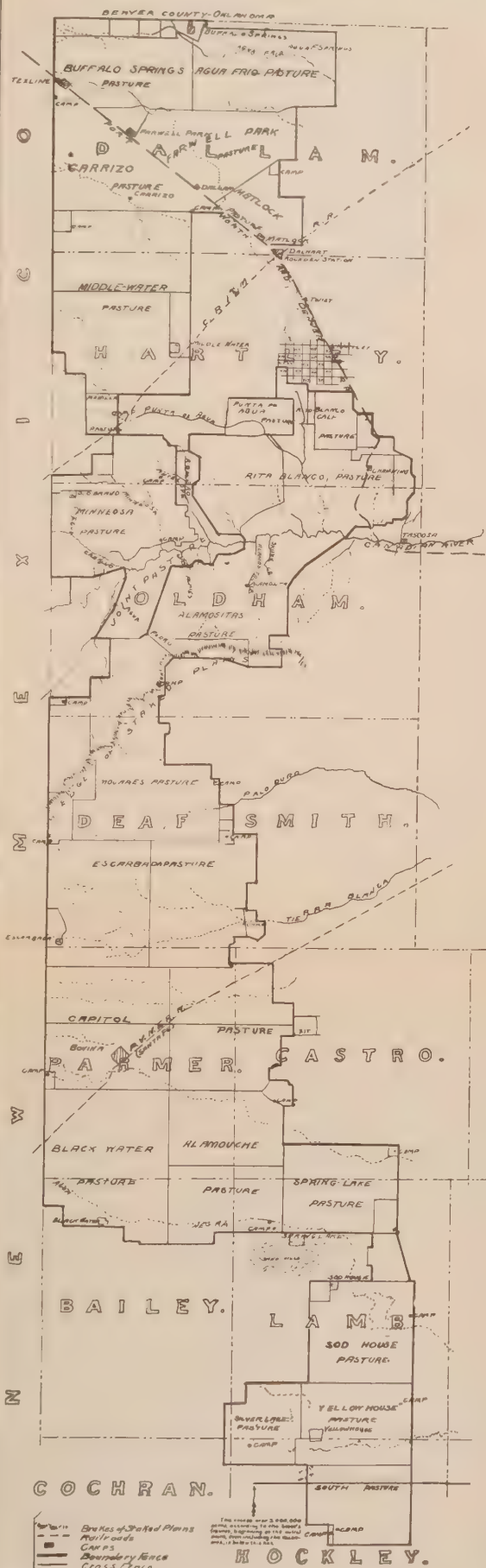
OIL AND GAS TEST WELL NEAR BUFFALO SPRINGS

place farmers upon the soil. Immense benefits from its colonizing work will accrue with the years.

When Texas traded these three million acres for a state capitol, she brought a tremendous pioneer institution within her borders. But the day of pioneer cowmen is past, and a Plains culture and civilization are now evolving from the soil where lately mustangs and Longhorns grazed beneath the brand of the XIT.



# Map of X I T Ranch Lands



NOTES

- Broken of Spotted Plains
- Railroads
- Camps
- Boundary Fence
- Cross Fence
- Running Creek
- Dry Creek
- Town

TRAILED BY  
TRAY B. SHAW.  
CHECKED BY  
J. E. HALEY.





## APPENDIX





## APPENDIX

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### HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE OF TEXAS

AUSTIN

LEE SATTERWHITE, *Speaker*  
CARL L. PHINNEY, *Chief Clerk*  
JOE WHITE, *Sergeant-at-Arms*

Feb. 3, 1925.

MR. JOHN V. FARWELL,  
Market and Monroe Streets,  
Chicago, Illinois.

Dear Sir:

We, the undersigned members of the 39th Texas Legislature, regret that you and Mrs. Farwell did not visit Texas and attend the inauguration of our Governor and witness the opening of the 39th Legislature for we wanted you not only to meet all of us in person, but to see our magnificent and splendid Capitol building which your Uncle and your Father, Chas. B. Farwell and J. V. Farwell constructed for us.

Although this building has been standing nearly forty years it is in a magnificent state of preservation and with no sign of deterioration, all due to the splendid, honest work of construction insisted upon by your ancestors, and the fact that they accepted in payment for this magnificent building land in the Panhandle section, has been one of the greatest assets ever possessed by Our Grand Lone Star State, and the opening up of that vast territory by your ancestors and yourself and stocking it with blooded cattle resulted in awakening our citizens and those who became citizens afterwards to the fact that of the wonderful possibilities of our Panhandle section, and the introducing by you of blooded cattle was the result of a boom in that direction by the stock raisers of Texas until today they lead all of our Sister States in the production of agriculture, which includes live stock.

We are proud of our building and proud of the fact that American citizens constructed it, and you have cause to be gratified and proud of the honest work done by your ancestors. As you and your ancestors are now fellow property owners with us we trust you will be able to visit Austin while we are in Session so that we and the other fellow members of the Texas Legislature will have the pleasure of meeting you in person.

Yours very respectfully,

LEE SATTERWHITE, Speaker  
Amarillo, Texas

E. D. DOWNS,  
San Augustine, Texas

BOWEN POPE,  
Hamlin, Texas

J. W. HARPER,  
Mount Pleasant, Texas

A. R. SHEARER,  
Mount Belvieu, Texas

L. M. KENYON,  
Galveston, Texas

JOHN T. SMITH,  
Austin, Texas

NORMAN G. KITTRELL, Sr.  
Houston, Texas

G. B. SANFORD,  
Simpson, Texas

JOHN H. VEATCH,  
Joshua, Texas

G. R. LIPSCOMB,  
Fort Worth, Texas

A. C. DUNN,  
Rosebud, Texas

J. M. PERDUE  
Gilmer, Texas

SAM D. W. LOW,  
Brenham, Texas

JOHN E. B. JASPER,  
Marshall, Texas

J. D. AVIS,  
Wichita Falls, Texas

BOWD FARRAR,  
Waxahachie, Texas

H. H. MOORE,  
Cooper, Texas

J. R. WESTBROOK,  
Denison, Texas

J. N. DAVIS,  
Quitman, Texas

H. S. McNATT,  
Fort Worth, Texas

W. P. ALEXANDER,  
Prairie Hill, Texas

TOM L. WALKER,  
Nocona, Texas

HENRY E. WEBB,  
Odessa, Texas

JAS. W. STELL,  
Paris, Texas

S. S. BAKER,  
Carthage, Texas

J. C. ALBRITTON,  
Yorktown, Texas

WM. A. FIELDS,  
Hillsboro, Texas

G. W. COODY,  
Linden, Texas

A. J. DURHAM,  
Sabinal, Texas

B. F. BEAN,  
Kirbyville, Texas

W. J. SIMMONS,  
Texarkana, Texas

O. L. PARISH,  
Ballinger, Texas

JOHN C. ROGERS,  
Center, Texas

C. A. BARKER,  
Sherman, Texas

SAM A. BRYANT,  
Memphis, Texas

EUGENE BLOUNT,  
Nacogdoches, Texas

A. P. STAUTZENBERGER,  
Seguin, Texas

W. P. LANE,  
Marshall, Texas

JOHN E. DAVIS,  
Mesquite, Texas

L. L. CARTER,  
Kyle, Texas

J. W. HALL,  
Houston, Texas

C. C. RICE,  
Crockett, Texas

TOM D. ROWELL, JR.,  
Jefferson, Texas

B. F. FOSTER,  
Del Rio, Texas

J. H. FLORENCE,  
Houston, Texas

O. L. BAKER,  
Orange, Texas

R. E. HIGH,  
Wills Point, Texas

JNO. C. AMSLER,  
Hempstead, Texas

ROBERT A. POWELL,  
Montgomery, Texas

TOM DeBERRY,  
Bogata, Texas

H. T. BROWN,  
Jacksonville, Texas

A. J. McKEAN,  
Prairie Lea, Texas

C. H. THOMPSON,  
Hallettsville, Texas

E. D. DUNLAP,  
Kingsville, Texas

J. A. MERITT,  
Snyder, Texas

WALTER ACKER,  
Houston, Texas

F. A. DALE,  
Bonham, Texas

W. S. TOMME,  
Onalaska, Texas

BATES F. WILSON,  
Houston, Texas

W. T. McDONALD,  
Huntsville, Texas



- J. R. McDUGALD,  
*Hull, Texas*
- D. S. HOLLOWELL,  
*Rockdale, Texas*
- V. E. CONWAY,  
*Commerce, Texas*
- LAWRENCE M. LANE,  
*Hico, Texas*
- DEWEY YOUNG,  
*Wellington, Texas*
- G. A. ATKINSON,  
*Sherman, Texas*
- J. M. COFFEY,  
*Aubrey, Texas*
- H. G. WOODRUFF,  
*Paradise, Texas*
- J. W. KINNBEAR,  
*Beaumont, Texas*
- LUKE, MANKIN,  
*Georgetown, Texas*
- T. T. MORRIS,  
*Floresville, Texas*
- H. S. BONHAM,  
*Beeville, Texas*
- T. P. HULL,  
*San Antonio, Texas*
- R. M. JOHNSON,  
*Palastine, Texas*
- W. R. MONTGOMERY,  
*Edinburgh, Texas*
- J. L. BIRD,  
*Walnut Springs, Texas*
- JOHN W. LAIRD,  
*Lufkin, Texas*
- G. J. COX,  
*Paris, Texas*
- GEO. C. PURL,  
*Dallas, Texas*
- E. S. CUMMINGS,  
*Merkel, Texas*
- W. A. WADE,  
*Terrell, Texas*
- ALF. P. C. PETSCH,  
*Fredericksburg, Texas*
- CLAUDE, D. TEER,  
*Granger, Texas*
- JAMES FINLAY,  
*Lohn, Texas*
- HAROLD KAYTON,  
*San Antonio, Texas*
- JOHN A. RAWLINS,  
*Dallas, Texas*
- HENRY B. DIELMANN,  
*San Antonio, Texas*
- ELLIS TAYLOR,  
*Blum, Texas*
- E. L. COVEY,  
*Goree, Texas*
- HARRY JORDAN,  
*Ft. Worth, Texas*
- H. L. FAULK,  
*Brownsville, Texas*
- E. C. GRAY,  
*Higgins, Texas*
- CHAS. T. ROWLAND,  
*Ft. Worth, Texas*
- W. M. HARMAN,  
*Waco, Texas*
- ED. R. SINKS,  
*Giddings, Texas*
- GORDON SIMPSON,  
*Tylor, Texas*
- J. R. DONNELL,  
*Temple, Texas*
- W. A. WILLIAMSON,  
*San Antonio, Texas*
- R. P. SMYTH,  
*Plainview, Texas*
- W. S. BARRON,  
*Bryan, Texas*
- ERNEST C. COX,  
*Corsicana, Texas*
- A. E. MASTERSON,  
*Angleton, Texas*

# LOGS OF EARLY TRAILS

Selma, Ala.

April 27, 1928.

DEAR MR. HALEY:

Your letter April 4 inst. reached me at San Antonio. In compliance therewith I am handing you herewith, log of the trail or road from Tascosa to Dodge City and from Tascosa to Springer, New Mexico. And also trail from Colorado City to the Yellow House ranch. Sorry I can not make you a nice map showing these roads—I am trying to get a log of the route from Buffalo Springs to Trinidad, Colorado. El Moro is just on the outskirts of Trinidad. Will also try to get a log of the trail cattle were driven on from Tascosa to Montana. Shall be glad to give you any information I can at any time.

I am

Yours sincerely,

W. S. MABRY.

P. S. In my recollections of the XIT ranch I stated I did not remember the name of the man who Col. Campbell brought to Buffalo Springs to look after the Cattle. As I now recall it, his name was Collins.

Yrs. W. S. M.

## TASCOSA TO DODGE CITY

Tascosa to Little Blue stage stand .....	35 miles
Little Blue stage stand to Zulu (Jim Cator's).....	30 miles
Zulu (Cator's) to Hardesty's Ranch.....	40 miles
Hardesty's Ranch to Jim Lanes on the Beaver.....	35 miles
Jim Lanes to Hines Crossing on Cimarron .....	40 miles
Cimarron to Hoodu Brown's on Crooked Creek .....	20 miles
Hoodu Brown's on Crooked Creek to Dodge City.....	<u>42 miles</u>
Total.....	<u>242 miles</u>

## TASCOSA TO SPRINGER, NEW MEXICO

Tascosa to Reynolds Ranch LE .....	36 miles
Reynold's Ranch to Punta de Agua.....	9 miles
Punta de Agua to Mineosa.....	15 miles
Mineosa to Harris Ranch.....	20 miles
Harris Ranch to Nells on Texiquite.....	25 miles
Nell's Ranch to Mesa Seco.....	40 miles
Mesa Seco to Taylor's ranch.....	25 miles
Taylor's ranch to Springer, N. M.....	<u>6 miles</u>
Total.....	<u>176 miles</u>

## TRAIL COLORADO CITY TO YELLOW HOUSE RANCH

Colorado City via Durham to Tahoka Lake was 100 miles and on to Yellow House ranch via Singer's store was 256 miles.

Singer's store was about two miles above where the city of Lubbock is today.

A FEW PAGES FROM J. E. MOORE'S "DIARY OF A  
TRAIL TRIP TO MONTANA, 1892."

Bought of Baker Brothers, Lusk, Wyoming, June 27, 92

300 # flour.....	9.75
200 # Bacon.....	28.00
30 # Arb. Coffee.....	7.50
40 # Lard.....	5.00
25 # Oat Meal.....	1.25
10 # Baking Powder .....	4.50
2 # soda .....	.20
2 gal. M. syrup.....	2.50
270 # potatoes.....	2.70
269 # Oats.....	3.70
255 # corn.....	2.78
5 gal. oil.....	1.25
1 ..... matches.....	.50
1 case corn.....	3.25
1 whip.....	1.00
1 H. stick.....	.35
6 pr. horse shoes.....	.72

74.95

Pine Bluff, Wyoming, June 15, 92. Bought of W. J. Rutledge, 107 lbs. corn \$1.35.

Horse Creek, Wyoming, June 17, 92. Paid to M. E. Ellis \$10.00 for watering herd.

1/2 doz. table spoons.....	.20
1 stew pan.....	.35
1 bunch lamp wicks.....	.10
	<u>75.60</u>

Cash.....	100.00
6 # Durham.....	3.60
1 quire paper.....	.25

179.45

Lusk, Wyoming, June 27, 92

Paid to R. L. Glover \$70.00 seventy dollars for two months work at \$35.00 per month.

July 23, Tongue River

Bought of

70 # potatoes 3 .....	\$2.10
15 # Sugar.....	1.50
1 # B. powder.....	.50
onions.....	1.00
Peas.....	.75
	<u>5.85</u>

Cedar Creek, Montana, July 30, 92

Mr. A. G. Boyce

You will please let J. E. Moore have the ring that I let you have of mine last April, and oblige yours truly.

R. G. Torrey

Total expenses of trip.....	1801.80
as follows	
wages.....	1340.30
chuck bill.....	387.67
watering expenses.....	48.00
Other expenses.....	<u>27.23</u>
	1801.80

Expenses of 1892

Drew.....	415.00
Paid out.....	373.89
chuck bills.....	387.67
watering expenses.....	48.00
wages paid out.....	1340.30
wages taken up.....	<u>325.89</u>
Total expenses.....	1801.80
Private money.....	4.45
Company's money.....	<u>12.88</u>
on hand total.....	18.33

#### COPY OF MAY'S LOG BOOK OF TRAIL TO MONTANA

From Buffalo Springs to Carrampa, 15 miles; from Crampa to Carrizzo 15 miles; from Carrizzo to Cimarron above 101 Ranch 15 miles; from Cimarron to Carrizzo Springs via Road Canyon, 18 miles; from Carrizzo Springs to head of Freeze Out, 18 miles; from Freeze Out to Butte

Creek, 10 miles; follow down Butte to mouth of Maverick, 30 miles; from Maverick to Water on Clay Creek, 15 miles; 30 miles to Lamar Water half way; from Lamar 12 miles to water on Sandy; follow up Sandy to Kit Carson, water twice on way. Cross R. R. at Carson and follow up Wild Horse Creek; two waters on creek; from head of Wild Horse to Republican 18 or 20 miles; from Republican to Hell Springs, 18 miles; from Hell Springs to Walker Camp, 18 miles; water in arroya 1 mile; went from there to water on Beaver, 35 miles; from there to South Platte, 30 miles; from South Platte to Pawnee 25 miles; from Pawnee to Pawnee Buttes, 15 miles; from Pawnee Buttes to Pine Bluffs, 25 miles; from Pine Bluffs to Horse Creek, 30 miles; follow down Horse Creek 25 miles and cross over the divide to north Platte 12 or 15 miles; cross Platte at mouth of Rawhide Creek follow up Rawhide Creek to Mouth of J. M. Creek, 30 miles; from head water on; J. M. to Lusk, 25 miles; from Lusk to Hat Creek store, 14 miles; follow down the Creek to Old Woman, 10 miles; from Old Woman to Lance Creek to Lodge Pole on Cheyenne, 25 miles; up Lodge Pole and down Buffalo to Bellefourche, 60 miles; from Bellefourche to Cottonwood 20 miles, down Cottonwood to Little Powder, 12 miles; from where you strike Little Powder to Big Powder 50 miles, from Big Powder to Mizpah, 15 miles; from Mizpah to Pumpkin Creek, 18 miles. Down Pumpkin Creek to Yellow Stone, 60 miles; down Yellow Stone to Ranch on Cedar Creek, 60 miles.

#### Horses left

- May 18 Left two horses, one black and one gray, both locoed.  
 May 22 Had one bay horse die from drinking too much alkali water.  
 May 26 Had a good gray horse to fall and break his neck.  
 May 30 Had three head of horses to freeze and one to so near it that I had to leave him.  
 June 10 Left a couple of crippled horses on the South Platte at Brush and had one to run off.

Total 11

#### Channing, April 20, 1892

Left C. at 11 o'clock A.M. and nooned at the tank 3 miles from C on the Rita Blanca Road and staid at the North E mill and laid over there on the 21st.

I got kicked that morning by a horse.

- 22 Moved to the E camp on the Punta de Agua.
- 23 Camped 4 miles north of Middle Water Ranch.
- 24 Moved to the mill 3 miles east of the Twin Mills in the morning.  
 In the eve I moved three miles east of Farwell Park
- 26 I moved to the no. 2 mill 7 miles n.e. of the Park



- 27 Laid over at same place.
- 28 Laid over at same place.
- 29 Moved to the Agua Frio and helped Webb to round up.
- 30 Moved to the Buffalo Springs pasture.
- May 1st. Received my first cattle.
- May 2. Moved to Perico.
- May 3. Moved to Agua Frio and received the rest of my cattle.
- May 4. Left for Montana.
- May 5. Staid on the head of Cold Springs.
- May 6. Staid on Cold Springs.
- May 7. Staid rained Cold Springs.
- May 8. Staid rained Cold Springs.
- May 9. Moved to Wild Cat Creek.
- May 10. Moved to Cimarron River.
- May 11. Moved four miles from head water on Auberry Canyon.
- May 12. Got off the trail, went too far East. Staid about 16 miles S. E. of Springfield.
- May 13. Got to within 3 miles of Springfield, Colo.
- May 14. Moved to Springfield and staid there until the morning of the 15th.
- May 15. Camped 10 miles north of Springfield.
- May 16. Watered on Butte and camped 2 miles east of Butte Mountains.
- May 17. Camped on Clay Creek, missed the upper water on Clay.
- May 18. Watered at the 10 mile water on Clay from Lamar and camped four miles from Lamar that night.
- May 19. Passed through Lamar and crossed the Ark. River.
- May 20. Got to the King Reservoir at Noon and staid there until next day at noon. Cold wind from the N.
- May 21. Pretty Cool. Cold north wind. Left K. R. after noon and went to Big Sandy.
- May 22. Watered five miles below Chivington on B. S. and camped at Chivington that night.
- May 23. Moved 10 miles north to B. S. cattle balked that morning.
- May 24. Camped 10 miles further north on B. S.
- May 25. Got to Kit Carson.
- May 26. Went 10 miles west to Wild Horse Creek.
- May 27. Staid near a sheep camp and laid over until noon next day.

# THE MONTANA RANCH

*By* WALTER FARWELL

BECAUSE cattle were found to take on weight much better in Montana than in Texas, cattlemen purchased small tracts of land containing water rights whereby grazing upon the surrounding government lands might be controlled. Different brands ranged the country in common. Precedent and mutual understanding was the law. The cattlemen held their roundups each fall and as a rule there was little friction between them. The interests of the cattlemen and sheepmen, however, were antagonistic and there were frequent clashes. In one war over a hundred men were killed.

The XIT Ranch sent its first cattle from Texas to Montana by trail. Later, when settlement of the country closed the trail route, they were shipped by rail. Then steers were sent north as yearlings, and at five or six years of age went to the yards at Kansas City or Chicago. After the XIT brand became well known, the yearlings were sold on the Texas range to feeders from the central states, principally Missouri and Iowa. Our Montana ranch was then disposed of to O. C. Cato, a brave and capable frontiersman who had been manager of the ranch since its beginning.

The trail was the epic of the cowboy; there he earned his spurs. There was the setting for many of his richly embroidered camp fire tales told for the worshipful admiration of the neophyte of his kind. The pace upon the trail was limited to fifteen miles a day, so that the cattle might be allowed to graze to prevent loss of weight. Riding along at this slow pace, week after week, keeping up the stragglers from behind, always enveloped in a cloud of dust kicked up by the herd, was a gruelling test of endurance for the cowboys. The monotony was relieved at times by brushes with unfriendly settlers through whose ranges the outfits had to pass, and the crossing of rivers dangerous for both cattle and men. The appearance of the cowboys at the end, their clothes in tatters, unshaven and with weeks of accumulated dirt, would have disgraced the worst of Coxey's army.

One year the usual drive was doubled and I saw twenty thousand cattle placed upon the trail. At the Yellowstone River they were rounded up in a natural corral made by high hills surrounding a valley. That night, as usual, the cowboys rode slowly around the herd, singing snatches of their folk songs to keep the cattle from becoming restless.

When the first glimmer of day showed over the horizon the whole herd was bedded, covering the valley as far as one could see, a quite unusual sight even in those days. The Yellowstone had to be crossed before the herd could be turned loose on its own territory. This was a rather ticklish proposition as the cattle did not always take the water easily. When the herd was nearing the water, our remuda was driven in first, as horses are strong and willing swimmers. The herd was driven to the water at a trot, and if the fates were kind, took it naturally and all was well. If they happened to refuse, a struggle ensued; husky cowpunchers with little or no clothing engaged in a hand to horn battle, partly on land and partly in the water, until enough cattle had been forced into the water to give the others a lead. Once started, generally the herd crossed without further trouble. The cattle were carried down by the current, and the curve of the swimming herd made a letter S as it struggled to reach the other shore.

Our cattle were turned loose on the Montana range. They grew into fine heavy beef steers, far too picturesque for their doom at the Chicago Yards. The cowboys, after being paid off, sometimes shot up a town and wrecked a barroom or two. Who can blame them? We are, of course, more civilized and more prosperous materially, but one would hardly be worth his salt if his blood did not tingle at the recollection of those rough and virile days.

### WORKING CATTLE IN MONTANA<sup>1</sup>

As Told to J. Evetts Haley by P. E. Long

The Syndicate went into Montana with a "pot-rack outfit." Other outfits laughed at them when they went in without tents. Oscar C. Cato was in charge of the ranch, and he wrote to the manager in Chicago that he was going to quit if they did not let him buy an outfit. Tents for the back end of a chuck wagon cost \$150. The owners wrote back and told him to get what he needed. Then the Syndicate brought tents back to Texas with the trail outfits, and some Texas ranches adopted them.

Any cowpuncher who has worked in Montana likes the country

<sup>1</sup>For fifteen months I attempted to find a man who had worked on the Montana Ranch. I inquired among old-timers throughout the entire Southwest and none could direct me to a man. Then July 15, 1928, I went out and joined the cowboys at the Matador chuck wagon, in Oldham County. At that one "work" I accidentally happened upon two cowboys who had worked for the Syndicate in Montana early in the 1900's, and were still in the saddle with the "young ones." As soon as the last calf was out of the corral and the day herd was turned loose, I joined P. E. Long in the growing shade of the chuck wagon, and he told me something of the XIT in Montana.—Author.

"between the rivers"—the Yellowstone and the Missouri. That was a country of big ranches. The XIT headquarters was on Cedar Creek, sixty miles north of Miles City. Almost due north sixty-five miles on the Missouri, at the mouth of Prairie Elk Creek, was the CK Ranch. It had bought out the old N-Ns about 1900. Almost due west of the XIT was a ranch owned by an eastern syndicate, the LU (LU Bar), on the Little Dry. About forty miles to our southwest was the Bow and-Arrow outfit on Custer Creek. About 150 miles north, between the Musselshell and Missouri River, was the N-. The country was rolling with no timber until you got up above the Bull Mountains, northeast of Billings. This was the extreme western line of the territory that we worked over.

About April 15th of every year the managers of the different ranches went to Miles City and held what was called the "stock meeting." There they mapped out the line of work. In that territory between the rivers we had two general roundups, "the east work," and "the west work." These works began about the first of May and ran until about the 10th of July. Both works started together.

The LU, CK, and XIT had two wagons out at the same time, one with the "west" and one with the "east work." The Bow and Arrows had a wagon for the "east," but just sent a "rep" with the "west work." These outfits, with the L7, on the Big Dry, and "reps" and wagons from other ranches, started the two "works" together on the head of Red Water. They worked down it to its mouth, and the "west work" turned west to work up the Missouri and over to the Bull Mountains. The "east work" went down the rivers and then turned back to meet the other. The "west work" dropped in and loaded its wagons at Forsythe, west of Miles City. The boys got on a drunk, and then, when they got down to Miles City, they pulled a good one. The XIT usually loaded out at Terry, a little place just at the mouth of Cedar Creek.

A man named Fry ran what we called the "band wagon." He loaded this up with clothing, cinches, straps, stirrup leathers, and other cowboy supplies and came out to meet the work about the head of the Little Dry.

The beef work started about the 10th of August and lasted until snow flew. We would still be at it in December. The LU shipped from Miles City and the XIT shipped from Fallon. The Syndicate shipped 22,000 head to Montana in 1902. We began unloading them at Fallon, but we could not get them across the Yellowstone. We tried to ferry them across, but it would have taken us forever, as we could ferry only a carload at a time. So we shipped them on east to Glendive, where there was a five-span bridge across the river. The city commission decided

it would not be safe to put more across the bridge than a half carload at a time. The bridge swayed a lot, but, when the commission left, we shoved them over in a stream.

The roundup outfits were made up of ten riders, two horse wranglers—a day wrangler and a “night hawk,” and a cook. We used a big bed wagon in addition to the chuck wagon, as the Montana beds were not like these Texas beds. The tent and beds would be stacked up so high you couldn’t throw a rock over them. It was a sight to see those outfits breaking camp. The first wagon to the next water got the best location on the water, and it was a regular wagon race from one camp to another. I have seen the lines handed up to the cook fifteen minutes after breakfast was over. Those outfits used stoves to cook with, and they were strong on light bread.

Rufe Morris, an old Dutch boy from Del Rio County, Texas, ran the XIT outfit on Cedar Creek when I went there. The old Hatcher Ranch, six miles north of Fallon, on Cabin Creek, was bought by the Syndicate, was used as a subdivision, and was run by Bob Fudge.

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As the first proofs for this book were being read, another Montana XIT cowboy was discovered by the author at Dallas, Texas. Tex Willis writes me the following brief description of some of the old XIT boys.

Bob Fudge was the most typical cowpuncher the Xs [XIT] ever had. He weighed 325 pounds, was a fine roper, and could ride a small pony further and easier than any man I ever saw.

Ed and Bill Harrison, ex-Confederate soldiers, were the greatest wagon bosses or trail herd bosses that ever pointed a herd or swum a mess wagon. They were diplomats; Ed Harrison was with . . . Quantrell’s Band.

Osie Cato was a great man; Ike Pryor knew him well.

Al Boyce stayed on my Alberta ranch on Belly River; Al had a good heart.

Stanley Miller, the greatest dude, looked like Tom Mix but was a better man. Stanley died in Deer Lodge penitentiary for that Harlem Mountain Bank robbery.

Well, the old days of Levi Strauss overalls, California salmon-colored trousers, flannel shirts, J. O. Bass and McKinney spurs, and Myers and Walker’s saddles . . . are gone forever.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Tex Willis to J. E. H., Dec. 4, 1928.



*Escobado Ranch Sept 1-98*

To the Capitol Freehold Land and Investment Company, Ltd., Channing, Tex.

Gentlemen:—The following is a list of employees on the *Fifth* division of the Ranch, with the amounts earned by each for month ending *Sept 30* 1898 and I certify that the same, amounting in all to \$ *Sept 98* is a true and correct report, to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Yours truly, *Ira Allen* Foreman.

NAME	WORKED		Total No. of Days Worked	At the Rate of per Month	Total Amount Earned
	FROM	TO			
<i>Ira Allen</i>	<i>Sept 1</i>	<i>Sept 30</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>J. M. Diamond</i>	"	"	"	"	<i>35</i>
<i>C. M. Conley</i>	"	"	"	<i>25</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>F. Luff</i>	"	"	"	"	<i>25</i>
<i>B. F. Turner</i>	"	"	"	"	<i>25</i>
<i>P. C. Dunlop</i>	"	"	"	"	<i>25</i>
<i>O. C. Dunlop</i>	"	"	"	"	<i>25</i>
<i>G. C. Nicaman</i>	"	"	"	"	<i>25</i>
<i>J. W. Arnold</i>	"	"	"	"	<i>25</i>
<i>Thos. Witherspoon</i>	"	"	"	"	<i>25</i>
<i>V. Luff</i>	"	"	"	"	<i>25</i>
<i>J. F. Rickard</i>	"	"	"	"	<i>25</i>
<i>W. P. Hamilton</i>	"	"	"	<i>30</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>D. F. Harrington</i>	"	"	"	"	<i>30</i>
<i>J. L. Connel</i>	"	<i>6</i>	"	<i>25</i>	<i>20.83</i>
<i>L. P. Witherspoon</i>	"	<i>8</i>	"	<i>28</i>	<i>23.33</i>
<i>L. P. Rayne</i>	"	<i>9</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>15.83</i>
<i>John Thork</i>	"	<i>19</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>R. C. Stockard</i>	"	"	"	"	<i>10</i>
<i>J. L. Petate</i>	"	"	"	"	<i>10</i>
<i>Ira Allen</i>	"	<i>1</i>	"	<i>30</i>	<i>75</i>

MONTHLY REPORTS OF THE DIVISION FOREMEN CARRIED A STATEMENT OF THE PAY ROLL, WHICH GAVE THE NAME OF EVERY MAN UPON HIS DIVISION, AND THE AMOUNT EACH RECEIVED

ENGLISH OFFICE.  
139 Cannon Street.  
LONDON.



AMERICAN OFFICE.  
148 Market Street.  
CHICAGO, ILL.

OWNERS OF  
X.A.T. RANCH,  
Panhandle, Texas.

Transvaal, 11th Nov 1889

Bob A Taylor

Chicago Ill

Dear Sir

There is considerable snow fell on the ground  
but has melted in places enough for cattle to get  
plenty to eat - wind from the north today very  
cold & cloudy snowing just a very little bit  
looks like we might have a worse spell than the  
one just over - I long for a few bright sunny days  
that the cattle may get filled up & a rest

Very Truly

E. S.

A. B. Joyce

Since writing the above I learn it is snowing  
heavily at Farwell Park - snowing here now  
all trains blocked from here north - much  
colder than the other storm - bad spell on  
stock will keep you advised as to the weather.

A. B.

THE GENERAL MANAGER OF THE RANCH WAS DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE TO  
THE OWNERS FOR ITS OPERATION. IN ADDITION TO ANNUAL REPORTS  
SHOWING THE RESULTS OF THE OPERATIONS OF THE YEAR, HE WROTE  
MANY LETTERS

# GENERAL RULES OF THE XIT RANCH

January, 1888

## No. 1

Whenever a person is engaged to work on the ranch, the person so engaging him will fill out and sign a blank, giving the name of the party employed, for what purpose employed, the amount of wages he is to receive, the date he will begin work, and deliver the same to the person employed, who must sign the counterpart of such contract, which must be forwarded to headquarters at the first opportunity; and no one will be put upon the Company's pay roll, or receive any pay until this is complied with.

## No. 2

Employees, when discharged, or on leaving the Company's service, are required to bring or send to the headquarter office, a statement from the person under whom they were at work, showing the day they quit the Company's service, and no settlement will be made with any employee, until such statement is furnished.

## No. 3

Employees discharged from or leaving the service of the Company are expected to leave the ranch at once and will not be permitted to remain more than one night in any camp.

## No. 4

The wages due any employee will not be paid to any other person without a written order from the employee to whom such wages are due.

## No. 5

No person in charge of any pasture, or any work on the ranch, or any contractor on the ranch, will be permitted to hire any one who has been discharged from the Company's service; nor shall any one who leaves an outfit, of his own accord, with the intention of getting employment at some other place on the ranch, be so employed except

by special agreement, made beforehand between the person in charge of the outfit he leaves and the one in charge of the outfit he wishes to work for.

#### No. 6

Private horses of employees must not be kept at any of the camps, nor will they be allowed to be fed grain belonging to the Company. No employee shall be permitted to keep more than two private horses on the ranch and all such horses must be kept in some pasture designated by the ranch manager.

#### No. 7

No employee shall be permitted to own any cattle or stock horses on the ranch.

#### No. 8

The killing of beef by any person on the ranch, except by the person in charge of the pasture, or under his instruction, is strictly forbidden. Nor is the person in charge of a pasture allowed to have beef killed, unless it can be distributed and consumed without loss. And all hides of beef killed must be taken care of and accounted for. It shall be the duty of each person having beef killed to keep a tally of the same and report the number, age and sex killed to headquarters every month.

#### No. 9

The abuse of horses, mules or cattle by any employee will not be tolerated; and any one who strikes his horse or mule over the head, or spurs it in the shoulder, or in any other manner abuses or neglects to care for it while in his charge, shall be dismissed from the Company's service.

#### No. 10

Employees are not allowed to run mustang, antelope or any kind of game on the Company's horses.

#### No. 11

No employee of the Company, or of any contractor doing work for the Company, is permitted to carry on or about his person or in his saddle bags, any pistol, dirk, dagger, sling shot, knuckles, bowie knife or any other similar instruments for the purpose of offense or defense. Guests of the Company, and persons not employees of the ranch temporarily staying at any of its camps, are expected to comply with this rule, which is also a State law.

## No. 12

Card playing and gambling of every description, whether engaged in by employees, or by persons not in the service of the Company, is strictly forbidden on the ranch.

## No. 13

In case of fire upon the ranch, or on lands bordering on the same, it shall be the duty of every employee to go to it at once and use his best endeavors to extinguish it, and any neglect to do so, without reasonable excuse, will be considered sufficient cause for dismissal.

## No. 14

Each outfit of men that is furnished with a wagon and cook is required to make its own camping places, and not impose on the other camps on the ranch unnecessarily.

## No. 15

Employees are strictly forbidden the use of vinous, malt, spirituous, or intoxicating liquors, during their time of service with the Company.

## No. 16

It is the duty of every employee to protect the Company's interests to the best of his ability, and when he sees they are threatened in any direction to take every proper measure at his command to accomplish this end, and as soon as possible to inform his employers of the danger threatened.

## No. 17

Employees of neighboring ranches on business are to be cared for at all camps, and their horses fed if desired (provided there is feed in the camp to spare); but such persons will not be expected to remain on the ranch longer than is necessary to transact their business, or continue their journey.

## No. 18

Bona fide travelers may be sheltered if convenient, but they will be expected to pay for what grain and provisions they get, at prices to be fixed from time to time by the Company, and all such persons must not remain at any camp longer than one night.



## No. 19

Persons not in the employment of the Company, but freighting for it, are not to be furnished with meals for themselves or feed for their teams at any of the camps on the ranch, but are expected to come on the ranch prepared to take care of themselves.

## No. 20

Loafers, "sweaters," deadbeats, tramps, gamblers, or disreputable persons, must not be entertained at any camp, nor will employees be permitted to give, loan or sell such persons any grain, or provisions of any kind, nor shall such persons be permitted to remain on the company's land anywhere under any pretext whatever.

## No. 21

No person or persons, not in the employment of the Company, shall be permitted to hunt or kill game of any kind, inside of the ranch inclosure, under any pretext whatsoever, and all employees are instructed to see that this rule is enforced. Employees of the Company will also not be permitted to hunt or kill game except when necessary for use for food.

## No. 22

It is the aim of the owners of this ranch to conduct it on the principle of right and justice to every one; and for it to be excelled by no other in the good behavior, sterling honesty and integrity, and general high character of its employees, and to this end it is necessary that the foregoing rules be adhered to, and the violation of any of them will be considered just cause for discharge.

## No. 23

Every camp will be furnished with a printed copy of these rules, which must be nailed up in a conspicuous place in the camp; and each and every rule is hereby made and considered a condition and part of the engagement between the Company and its employees, and any employee who shall tear down or destroy such printed rules, or shall cause the same to be done, shall be discharged.

By Order of the Company,

ABNER TAYLOR,  
*Manager.*

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